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MOTHER EARTH

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By

MONTAGUE FORDHAM, M.A.

A Proposal for the Permanent Reconstruction of our Country Life, and a Description of the Land Club Scheme.

"Something definite and constructive . . . . . as plain as a pikestaff."—*Literary World.*

LONDON

THE OPEN ROAD PUBLISHING CO.

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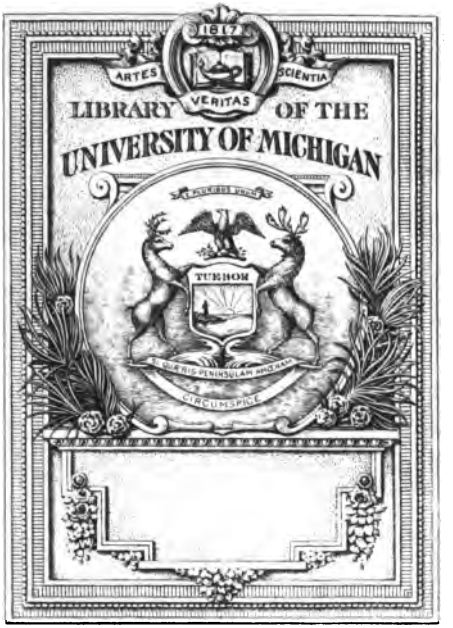
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MOTHER EARTH

Popular Edition

MOTHER EARTH

A PROPOSAL FOR THE PERMANENT RECONSTRUCTION OF OUR COUNTRY LIFE

BY

MONTAGUE FORDHAM, M.A.

WITH PREFACE BY

J. A. HOBSON, M.A.

AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE LAND CLUB SCHEME

LONDON
THE OPEN ROAD PUBLISHING CO.
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1908

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PREFACE

IF Englishmen, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, could have foreseen that agriculture, then by far the foremost industry of the nation, was destined in a hundred years to take the sixth place among the occupations, and that by that time the growing suckage of the towns would have left less than a quarter of our peeple in rural life, they would have looked forward to the change with terrible forebodings. For history presents us with no example of a nation of town-dwellers divorced from life and work upon the soil, which has long maintained itself in safety and prosperity.

While this persistent migration from the country to the town has doubtless been attended by an increase of national wealth and of certain sorts of comfort and luxury, the price paid in health, character, and the more enduring sources of happiness has been incalculably great. Our dependence for no less than four-fifths of our bread supply upon foreign lands is in itself the least important factor in the case. What matters most is the damage to vitality, to stability of character, home life, and sanity of interests involved in crowding our people into large industrial cities with no fixity of work or

home, and no close contact with the resources and the beauty of their native land.

What we are making is a mass of mobile, industrial, and commercial wage-earners, absorbed in an unwholesome struggle for a slippery livelihood, with no particular attachment even to the city where they happen to reside, and with no real sense of "a stake in the country." None of the important improvements in town life, sanitary, economic, educational, and moral, which have taken place are adequate solutions. Among all thoughtful persons there is a growing conviction of the necessity of a reorganisation of agriculture and the conditions of rural life. Part of the townward movement is recognised as a normal process in our modern civilisation; a larger share of modern work requires the close contact and co-operation of large groups of workers. But it is also recognised that our system of land tenure, and other grave defects linked with it, are responsible for driving this movement to a perilous excess. When we reflect that the industry of agriculture, which in 1811 engaged more than one-third of our working population, now engages less than one-tenth, and that each census shows an increased rapidity of depletion, we cannot rest in the assurance that this is a natural product of modern division of labour.

The fact is, that nowhere in the civilised world is agriculture so destitute of the economic and moral stimuli to progress as in England. The three factors *in the* "agricultural interest," landowner, farmer,

labourer, have been steadily drifting further apart. More and more we have a class of absentee landowners, personally ignorant of the soil excepting as a playground, and leaving the management or mismanagement of their estate to others. The ordinary tenant-farmer, depleted of capital by the long maintenance of high rents with falling agricultural prices, destitute of agricultural science and the business training required for grappling with the structure of his business and the difficulties of the market, has no sufficient hold upon the land to induce him to adapt himself to the new conditions. As for the agricultural labourer, who does the real hard work upon the land, he has a less incentive to efficiency, less hope of personal advance than any other class in the civilised world. Though his standard of material life is somewhat higher than his father's, he has gained less than any other working class from the enormous enhancement of modern wealth. In rural England he can still earn by excessive toil only just enough to support himself and bring up a family below the limit of real personal efficiency; he can make no adequate provision against sickness, unemployment, or other emergency, and after the age of sixty he slips from casual labour into the degradation of the poor-house and a pauper's grave. This is the normal condition of the labourer in large districts of southern England. This degradation is not necessary. Our land is not poor but rich, and is large enough to support in comfort and happiness a

considerable population earning its living by work upon the soil combined with other industries fitted to co-operate with agriculture. What is felt to be necessary is first to sweep away the festering remains of feudal land tenure which cumber the land, then to put the actual farmer and labourers in secure control of the land they cultivate at fixed and reasonable rents, to give them easy control of necessary capital and access to the best available knowledge of agriculture, and to enable them to sell this produce in markets where they are not the prey of acute middlemen.

For the first time some serious organised effort is being devised to secure these sane conditions of rural revival. But townsmen politicians are apt to err either by timidity or rashness in handling matters of which they have little knowledge. The result is they are driven by the pressure of land-owning interests to a tentative policy of wasteful compromise. Now, as John Stuart Mill said, "Small remedies do not produce small results; they produce no results." What is wanted is a large, bold, comprehensive, and genuinely organic reform. The conspicuous merit of this little work of Mr. Fordham is its realisation of this condition. Combining a long and thorough experience of country life with a varied business training and a close practical acquaintance with the handicrafts, the restoration of which is in some measure essential to the re-creation of rural England, he sketches in this book the varied conditions of

the rural revival in their true essential relations. Recognising, as all sane thinkers do, the necessity of harmonising the individualistic and socialistic tendencies which are striving to find expression in our institutions, he would leave the actual control of all rural industries to the individual workers, with freedom to co-operate for credit and for other purposes, whilst Society in its fullest aspect should own the land and organise the "market." Thus individual effort, neighbourly co-operation, and the State, all play parts organically related in the work of restoration.

Readers are familiar with the part here attributed to the State as the sole proprietor of the national estate: the instability of the present half-way house of "renting" and "rating" will become increasingly apparent as time goes on. They are less familiar with Mr. Fordham's bold proposal that the State should itself organise and direct the market. Many, distrustful of the State's capacity to undertake such delicate work, will prefer to look to co-operative societies, such as exist in Denmark and elsewhere, for the solution of the selling problem. This issue, important as it is, may well remain open for the present.

The most far-reaching and important instrument in his constructive proposal is the Land Club. It is not too much to say that the whole success of the revival depends upon the establishment and maintenance of these local co-operative unions. They are

needed now for organising and enforcing local demands for small holdings under the present Act, they will be needed for defending the legal and economic rights of the small-holders after they have got the land. Still more will they be needed for the organisation of loan-banks and insurance, for the working of co-operative dairies and other businesses, for providing machinery, and for the collection and transport of farm produce.

The State may own the land, furnish education, cheap credit and even market facilities, but the reality of the agricultural revival will depend more on the Land Club than on any other agent of reform. For the Land Club is the expression of the power of self-help amongst groups of neighbours engaged in a common work and a common life.

In conclusion, I should add that the great merit of this stimulating little book is that it is no narrow plan for reviving agriculture, but is based on a full appreciation of the meaning of "country life," the poetry of it, as well as the prose, the freedom and enjoyment as well as the work. Mr. Fordham is one of those who hold that the prevalence of city life has perverted our standard of values, destroying by its crowded streets and its feverish commercialism the wholesome conditions of society which belong to a prosperous and contented country-side, where men meet as neighbours and as congenial fellow-workers, and not as trade competitors and hustlers. Though to some readers certain planks in Mr. Fordham's

platform of practical reform may appear impracticable, this is no more than can be said of all large organic schemes of reform in their incipiency. What Mr. Fordham does is to give substance to a large ideal, which hitherto has been floating vaguely before the minds of many, and to afford direction to the efforts of those who are willing to work towards its realisation.

J. A. HOBSON.

December, 1907.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE POPULAR EDITION

SINCE the issue of this book the new Small Holdings Act has come into force, and it appears that there is a considerable demand for land in some counties. I do not myself expect extravagant results from the administration of this law, but it may have great value if it be generously administered by the local authorities. It is, however, necessary to realise clearly that in addition to the extremely important question of small holdings, many other problems must be solved before country life can be reconstructed on a satisfactory basis.

Also since the writing of this book, the Land Club system has obtained the approval of a considerable number of country people in Kent and Surrey, and Land Clubs are being formed by them in country towns and villages. It seems possible that country people may organise themselves in this way, and that we are at the beginning of a new democratic movement. This development will be helped, I hope, by all interested in the question.

I have made a few alterations in the contents of this book, in the light of criticisms which I have

received from many writers in the press and elsewhere. I have, in particular, revised the paragraphs dealing with the State regulation of markets. The scheme that I have suggested under the title of "A policy for the future" is, of course, obviously unsuited for immediate application. Increase of productivity of the soil combined with co-operation and effective transit arrangements may solve many of our market difficulties; or some such scheme as I have propounded may follow the elaboration of the co-operative system. No one can say what will happen, but my suggestions will, I hope, show readers that the future may bring methods of regulating markets which are free from the disadvantages both of protection and of unregulated competition.

I trust that this popular edition of my book may be useful, not only to country people, but also to the workmen of the towns. Their interests are greatly involved in this question, and their help is urgently needed for its solution.

MONTAGUE FORDHAM.

LIMPSFIELD,
SURREY, *April 1908.*

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Part I

INTRODUCTORY

MOTHER EARTH

CHAPTER I

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

IT will be universally conceded that if we are to deal effectively with the social difficulties that have arisen in England, we must as a first step adapt the conditions of country life to the needs both of our manufacturers and of our agriculturists, and thus reorganise a country population. For more than half a century there has been a steady stream of sturdy workers from country to town, denuding our hamlets and villages, and by overcrowding our towns driving the weaker city workers into the classes of the unemployed and unemployable, to live under conditions of extreme misery.

Squires, farmers, small holders,[1] blacksmiths, carpenters, labourers, all have had their share in this amazing exodus which has in half a century probably

[1] The reduction of the number of small holders has, notwithstanding efforts made for their encouragement, continued in England, up till 1906, the last year in which statistics are published. *See* "Returns of the number of Agricultural Holdings," Cd. 3408.

carried with it at least four million souls, and reduced the number of those engaged in agriculture by something like one-half. The bitter poverty and misery of the agricultural labourer in the past (a parallel for which is now found in the life of our city slums), followed by the financial decay of the farmers, seems to have bred a disgust for mother earth amongst the rising generation, who look on Nature as a cruel step-mother, and fly from her accordingly.[1] Thus the greater number of the young men, and practically all the young women, seem to disappear from the villages, taking gaiety and continuity from the life, and leaving no one to create the new generation.

Such young men as remain appear to have little interest in the land, and, in many districts, finding it doubtless impossible to obtain houses in which to live, wander from farm to farm. The cultivation of the land is left largely to the older men, and there appear to be few growing up to replace them, for we have somehow succeeded in damaging at the root this tree of slow growth, whose fruit is our sturdy country people. The diminution and uncertainty of labour, with its concurrent increase of wages and deterioration of quality, has recently made matters more difficult for such farmers as do not rely on their own families for labour. Moreover, want of sufficient capital amongst farmers is very general, and on the

[1] There is little doubt that this distaste for country life has been fostered by the educational system imposed on the villages by a Parliament quite out of sympathy with the needs of country people.

poor land, away from the railways, a large proportion are, it seems, in debt; many struggle on, partly in the hope that the tide will turn, and partly because they realise how little chance they have of obtaining other employment.[1]

Their position is also complicated by the fact that the dealers who give them credit take unreasonable advantage to sell to them at high prices, and to purchase from them at low. Many of the cleverer farmers themselves become dealers, and so obtain advantage from the misfortunes of their fellows.

Land still tends to remain out of cultivation,[2] or to be laid down or allowed to go down as grass; but in some districts the want of labour makes dairy farming difficult.

In other districts much of the land is held for purposes of sport or pleasure by landlords who obtain their wealth by the employment of labour in the towns, and have no genuine country interests. I am of opinion that the advent of such men is seldom of real gain to country life, for although they bring money into the villages they draw more and more of the workers from the cultivation of the soil to be their servants or workpeople; moreover, they do little to aid the rebuilding of country life, from which they are generally, by their methods of thought,

[1] I must admit that the farmers have just had a good year (1907) and are naturally feeling more hopeful, but the general condition remains, I feel confident, much as I have stated.

[2] The total farmed area slowly but steadily decreases year by year. *See* "Agricultural Statistics," vol. xli., part i. (Cd. 3281).

entirely detached. In some places they aggravate matters by throwing land out of cultivation for sporting purposes, a course of action that I find to be most bitterly resented by the labourers, both on sentimental and economic grounds.

There seems reason to fear that the country exodus is not ceasing,[1] but may at best be diverted into another channel. Almost every village has sent out pioneers who are now established in one or other of the colonies. Acting as amateur emigration agents, these men and women draw away the most energetic young people of all classes to help in the development of newer lands. Thus the very people whom we want most are those that leave.[2]

The position in the towns is far more serious. The in-coming country people on the whole do well, but by taking the place of the less competent city-bred lads and girls, create an increased pressure which has resulted in about one-third of the population being forced down to the poverty line; from them "arises one eternal wail of misery—the hopeless misery that, with all its drawbacks, the country does not know—of those who having fallen are trampled by those who stand."[3]

There is some reason to suppose that, notwithstanding all efforts, this misery is on the increase.[4]

[1] *See* "Journal of Board of Agriculture," December, 1906.

[2] One hundred and forty-five thousand emigrants left for Canada alone in one year (1906-7).

[3] Rider Haggard, "A Farmer's Year" (Longmans).

[4] *On this point see* Clementina Black's work on "Sweating

The problem, which is clearly as much a townsman's as a countryman's, is perhaps the most serious by which the country has ever been faced. It involves the decay of the manhood of the nation; if this decay is to be arrested we have not only to stem these streams of people from the country, but also to create a strong counter current from the town. For this a great national effort is needed to make country life attractive. Nor is this alone enough. If we are to secure for the nation the benefit of this effort, we must establish this new life on a new economic basis, solid and definite, and free from the elements that have brought our country life into decay; and, having established this basis, we must proceed to build up this new life into a form sufficiently flexible to adapt itself to the varying needs of ever-changing society. In order to grasp the features of such a reconstruction, we must have first a clear understanding of our economic and social objects, and of the weak points in our policy which have caused our present difficulties. Where do we stand in these matters? Up to the present times our politico-economic efforts have been very

and the Minimum Wage" (Duckworth). It appears that the effect of helping the unfortunate poor is somewhat as follows: A woman working at 1s. a day receives a dole from private sources or by way of out-door relief of 2s. 6d. a week: the pressure and competition between semi-starving workers is such that a day will soon come when in dread of losing employment she will, relying on the dole to aid her, accept work at 10d. a day; as a result the local rate for her work will be reduced, and 10d. per day will soon become the maximum rate of wages.

largely directed to the improvement of our manufactures and our trade, which in bulk is now enormous.

The classes increased by this policy are mainly three:

1. The actual productive wage-earners living principally in the cities, engaged in work generally of very slight interest in itself. The conditions of their work and the wages they receive result in their never obtaining the essential elements of healthy life, good houses and food, fresh air and ample facilities for feeding and educating their children to be fitting citizens of a great state.

2. The unemployed, unemployable, and sweated classes, now a large section of the nation: there is no doubt that, although their condition has been greatly aggravated by the migration to the towns, they are an inevitable product of our competitive trade system.[1]

3. The middlemen, or manipulators of trade, and others who are associated with business as investors, and not managers. To this class belong the merchants, dealers, bankers, and stockbrokers, company directors and the like; many of them make large incomes either by speculation or by virtue of commissions on the transactions that pass through their hands; they employ an army of clerks and secretaries.

The political power of the nation is largely in

[1] Those who still feel uncertain on this point should read "The Problem of the Unemployed," by J. A. Hobson (Methuen).

the hands of the first and last of these classes, for the first has numbers, and the last money and organising ability. The want of understanding of country life which prevails amongst these two groups has, so far, made reconstruction almost impossible. Whether the leaders of the new democracy will take a sufficiently wide and generous view of our problem remains to be seen. To my mind this is the question of the day, and a satisfactory solution the only remaining hope for the country.

To return to our general argument. Any increase of trade gives advantages to the class of manipulators through the increase of commissions, and fuller opportunities for speculation. How far it benefits the nation as a whole is doubtful.

We have now great wealth, our national annual income being about £1,800,000,000: of it over one-third accrues to less than four per cent. of the nation, who seem, from statistics based on probate duty returns, to hold all but a comparatively minute portion of the land and capital of the country.[1] This wealth appears to be rapidly demoralising its possessors and their hangers-on, many of whom are giving up all useful work and becoming indolent and luxurious: it is such demoralisation that leads to the decay of races. Therefore for the nation the important question is not the accumulation by

[1] *See* "Inland Revenue Report," Cd. 1717, and "Riches and Poverty," by Chiozza Money (Longmans).

trade or otherwise of even more wealth, but the deflection of this wealth into more useful channels. Moreover, from the national point of view, any increase in the class of manipulators is to be regretted. The tendency of this class to monopolise the control of trade and politics, to speculate on a large scale, and to use their political influence for their own interests, threatens to become as great a danger in this country as in America. It undoubtedly caused the South African war, and their power, if applied to the control of our food supplies, may yet go far to destroy the nation.[1] Further, any increase of the town-bred clerk class is a misfortune. It lessens the number of those engaged in actual productive work, and thus tends to reduce our productive power and general prosperity. Moreover, the work itself is rarely well paid, and is often dreary and uninspiring. Lastly, it must not be forgotten that increase in wholesale competitive manufacture and trade keeps more and more workmen employed in uninteresting mechanical work, to the detriment of their true development and character, crowds our people more and more into the cities, and definitely creates the unemployed and unemployable classes.

Considering, therefore, how doubtful, at the present period of our evolution, is the advantage to the nation of growth of trade, we need no excuse if

[1] On the influence of this class Professor Loria's, "The Economic Basis of Society" (Swan Sonnenschien) is most *enlightening.*

we put trading considerations behind us. We may then, definitely, turn our faces into another direction and make it our aim to bring a new spirit into our national life, and to restore the people to their mother the earth.

Let us then direct our energies to the fostering of schemes, the basic ideas of which are the increased happiness, health, and efficiency of the people, the production of more of the nation's food and a wider distribution of wealth.

In the fostering of these schemes it will be well worth our while, and indeed may be necessary, to employ not a little of the great wealth accumulated through our trading developments.

Our object now made clear, we may divide it into two. The first, the building up in our half-deserted country districts of a varied population of agriculturists, artisans, and craftsmen, housed and working in the country with the advantages of pure food and pure air. It is desirable that such a country population should be left as free as possible, in their lives and in their work. Thus they will have fuller opportunities for self-expression, and obtain the full benefit of the inspiration that comes from contact with Nature. Such people would not, I feel sure, be liable to be inflamed by the race for wealth: country people rarely are: neither would they have great opportunity of becoming rich; on the other hand, it might reasonably be expected that they would be a self-supporting section of the community and have

ample surplus wealth. It is, of course, of the utmost importance that such a population should be varied in character. At the present time there is little permanency in country life, there is a constant coming and going, and little real home life; but if we had more country workshops, those who were naturally disinclined to the life of the fields would be able to turn to other forms of work without drifting away from their homes. A further advantage would also be obtained. The different types of minds grouped in such a population would cause a clash of ideas resulting in a really living existence, full of interest and amusement, and completely free from the lethargy that is apt to descend upon a purely agricultural people.

Such a population would have the inestimable advantage of fresh air; they should be well housed, their children must be well fed, and must receive at the hands of the State an education and training in the schools and fields, specially directed to make them aware of the charm and mystery of nature, and to implant in them a devotion to the soil and all that belongs to it. The creation of such a population should be our first aim.

Our second object should be to secure the highest possible cultivation of the soil. We have to learn to look upon the land not as a playground for the aristocracy or plutocracy, not even primarily as a national or personal investment, but as a means of feeding the people. A free people living under such

conditions as it is our first object to attain would, by virtue of their higher intelligence and greater adaptability, be better qualified to cultivate the land on modern scientific lines than our present skilful and hard-working, but rather conservative agriculturists. But to obtain high productivity we want something more. Our people must have (1) ready access to land so that it may be used to best advantage; (2) ready access to capital for the effective development of such land; and (3) far greater knowledge of agricultural processes than they usually enjoy.

Access to capital is of the greatest importance. Agricultural loan societies of the form known as "credit banks"[1] should be instituted, prepared to provide capital wherever it can be used with any chance of success. As already mentioned, many of our cultivators are, at the present time, short of capital, and consequently, to some extent, at the mercy of their creditors. This is one of the great evils of the present position, and results in endless difficulties and even frauds. Further, our country population from their childhood must be educated in a thorough understanding of the land: and all the advantages of modern invention should be clearly explained to every farmer, peasant, and other cultivator able to take advantage of them. Then every one, however poor, should be able to obtain advice as to the seed best adapted to the land,

[1] This somewhat misleading title should if possible be avoided.

facilities for breeding good stock, whether cattle, pigs, sheep, or fowls, and information as to fertilisers, and the best means of developing his land; and also guidance in the employment of the capital provided through the loan societies.

There are scattered throughout England men of great knowledge and ability who with the help of sufficient capital and unbounded energy have, notwithstanding the general difficulties, succeeded in obtaining some measure of agricultural success. The abilities of these men should not be reserved for their private advantage alone, but employed in the public service of aiding their less fortunate fellows.

In relation to the productivity it is, of course, of great importance that as few people as possible should be diverted from productive work in order to undertake distribution: the distribution of the produce to the consumer must therefore be far more efficiently and far more honestly organised than it is at present. Other countries have dealt efficiently with these details. It is for us to follow suit and not look for immediate profits, but to realise that the increase of production obtained by a successful policy on these lines would, in itself, be a great national asset.

Moreover, in order that the economic position should be secured, it will be necessary to deal concurrently with markets and the land laws. I propose to indicate by way of an illustration the difficulties that have arisen, and would tend to increase in our markets. Not sufficient detailed attention appears

to me to have been paid to this aspect of the question.

I take for this illustration the trade in eggs: at present we import about five million eggs daily: such eggs could be easily produced by our cottagers but for the hostile interest of the trading classes, supported by the apparent interest of the consumer. Whilst it is the national interest and should be the traders' interest to reconstruct the egg-producing capacity of the country districts, the latter find it pays them better to take advantage of the cheapness of eggs in other parts of the world, with the result that this foreign trade has been developed enormously. Had the course of action pursued in other countries been taken in England, and the English cottagers encouraged by education and the reorganisation of markets to keep hens and provide the nation with eggs, and had a similar educational policy been pursued with the farmers, large and small, in relation to cattle, pigs, and other agricultural produce, a section, at least, of our country population would have remained at home; the crowding into the towns with all its concurrent evils of unemployment and misery would have been mitigated, to the great increase of the national happiness and the ultimate saving of the national pocket.

But even if we now take the course followed by other countries, and in addition to adopting an educational policy proceed to reorganise distribution and sale on a co-operative basis on the lines now

suggested for the egg trade by the National Poultry Organisation Society. What will be the result? There is no doubt that we shall attain success at first, but it remains to be seen whether the results will be permanent. As production increases, international and internal competition may be an ever-growing difficulty, reducing prices and destroying our reconstructed industries. This tendency has, I understand, already shown itself in certain branches of the fruit trade.

To illustrate this let us again refer to the egg trade in its relation to cottage life. Let us suppose an efficient scheme is evolved (at, of course, some considerable expense) whereby every cottager's wife in England learns, through some system of visiting teachers, everything that is known about the successful keeping of hens, and is further provided with a good stock of fowls and sufficient land for her purpose: moreover, suppose that co-operative associations on the lines already successfully working arrange in every district for the collection, grading, and packing of eggs and their distribution to the shops in London or other towns, or to the consumer direct: it is not to be supposed that the peasantry who now supply us from France, Russia, Italy, Denmark, Austria, Roumania, Egypt, and Morocco, their agents and dealers will accept without a struggle this intervention in their market. As a free competition has arisen in the past to supply us with corn to the detriment of the farmer, so in time might the free

competition to supply us with eggs become even more severe to the detriment of the sale of our cottagers' surplus produce.

This competition might be equally destructive whether the cottagers acted individually or were organised co-operatively; and as foreign competition reacted on the home trade it might cause internal competition even between co-operative associations themselves; thus the price of eggs throughout England might be forced down to a level at which it could not pay the producer; the trade would then fall into decay, and the nation would lose the result of their special work in fostering it. In considering this question in relation to the cottagers, one has also to realise that at the very commencement of the revival of the trade, with some modicum of prosperity to the cottagers, the landlords would utilise the position to raise cottage rents to a reasonable figure. At present cottage rents in purely agricultural districts average, probably, about 2s. per week; the lowest economic rent for a fair cottage and a quarter of an acre of garden land is 5s. a week; this rent would be demanded and obtained.

Unless, then, our economic basis is reconstructed, we have, therefore, good reason to fear that when, by the efforts of the National Poultry Association or by Government action, the cottagers of England are trained to provide the nation with eggs, such profits as are not lost in the competition of markets may go

into the pockets of the landlord.[1] The same line of argument applies to every other class of produce; so that on the whole we may be fairly certain that unless our markets are in some way regulated, either by co-operative effort or otherwise, the landlord and the consumer may be expected to divide the advantages of any national policy of social reconstruction, and little or no permanent advantage to our country population would ensue. This is the economic side of the problem we have to face and deal with effectively. It will be perhaps worth while pursuing this question into one side issue: although the landlord would benefit, it does not follow that the situation would be better under a system of peasant proprietorship or any other form of land tenure. The peasant proprietor, like any other small holder, is peculiarly helpless under the pressure of market conditions and the competition of large holders. Being often short of capital, he is also liable to suffer from the exactions of the money-lender. He is therefore specially liable to be ground down in times of stress to conditions of extreme poverty. The fact is that so long as we have the pressure of the upper millstone of unregulated competitive trade it is not sufficient to manipulate the the lower millstone provided by the land laws. If we are to obtain our ends and make the life attractive, and the economic position permanent, we must

[1] Small holders not only in this country but, according to some reports, even in Denmark itself are constantly being reduced to poverty by the action, as it appears to me, of *these economic forces.*

clearly deal with both sides of the question and build up a system that will secure for our English agricultural population a definite and permanent margin of profit on their productions sufficient to make it well worth their while to carry on the business of agriculture. That this can be done without raising prices, I feel confident. But it will be necessary to modify our land laws, increase productively and regulate markets. It will be seen that the same considerations largely affect all questions of gardens, allotments, and small holdings, and should govern all legislation relating to our food supplies.

It is, perhaps, well to emphasise the fact that this question of markets is to a large extent a new problem arising partly from increased facilities of transit, and partly from the rapid spread of knowledge, resulting in any invention capable of affecting improvement in agriculture being quickly known throughout the world. This, then, being a new problem must be faced by new methods. To put the matter simply, a cottager in selling his surplus produce is, in effect, dealing with the competition of the world manipulated by financiers, by politicians, by accidents of fate over which the peasant has no more control than he has over the weather. For example, the miseries of the Russian peasant, or the successful manipulation of slave labour in Morocco, may at any time give opportunities to Jew higglers to buy eggs from the Russian peasant or Morocco

slave-driver at a price which, if combined with the perfection of the system of preserving eggs, might bring down English prices 25 per cent., and destroy profits for every peasant in England, and tend to drive him again from the country to the towns or colonies.

Some similar accident of fate might cause a further drop of twopence per pound in beef, with the probable result, according to Mr. Rider Haggard's computations,[1] of the destruction of the profit of most of the graziers of England, whilst the spread of sheep-farming in the Argentine or New Zealand might similarly reduce the price of mutton and ruin our sheep farmers.

By these illustrations and remarks I trust I may have emphasised important features of the situation, and made it clear that it is necessary to take a wider view of the matter than is generally done. It will be seen that until a scheme has been elaborated dealing with all the points, that we can hardly hope for the permanent reconstruction of our country life; we must mend *all* the holes in the kettle if it is no longer to leak. We must first make sure that the result of our labours will be permanent, and that the advantages will neither pass to the landlords, nor be lost in the competition of markets, but that the nation, on whom will naturally fall the cost of any scheme, will gain the full and direct benefit, in part in direct financial gain, and in part in the general advantage

[1] "*Rural England*," by Rider Haggard (Longmans).

which will arise from the re-creation of an independent, healthy, and happy country population. With this in mind, I propose to consider our question in its various aspects, and show finally how the various remedies of the particular evils will combine in a complete scheme.

Part II

THE ECONOMIC BASIS

CHAPTER II

LAND AND CAPITAL

IN dealing with the economic basis, it is perhaps hardly necessary to say that one attaches value to the economic side of the question only in so far as it shows us how we may provide an environment in which the people may live just and happy lives free from great wealth or great poverty, from enervating ease or excessive anxiety. We are indeed merely trying to remove such bonds as unduly restrict individual growth, and we must be careful that freedom of action is limited in those directions only where a spirit of unchecked individual self-aggrandisement might spread a blight over our national life. Our endeavour is therefore to destroy in detail the elements of injustice, corruption, and temptation to fraud, that cramp our present systems, and to suggest directions in which the evolution of the individual should be fostered.

Having this in mind, I propose to treat the economic side of my subject under three heads. (1) The right of access to land and capital; (2) The regulation of the markets; (3) The wages of labour.

ACCESS TO LAND

It is impossible to conceive of any great civilisation in which access to the land has been completely denied to the people.

In essence it is the right to live, for no one can live without rest for the sole of his foot, and a place to lay his head: in practice, want of access to land tends to the slavery of the landless class, and in our civilisation it definitely denies to a large section of the people a real home, for almost every suitable site in the districts where the workers of all classes are compelled to live have long since been appropriated by the landowning or capitalist classes, and all who are not exceptionally wealthy are, practically, obliged to take whatever home is offered, however unhealthy or unsuited to their work and temperament. Thus personal liberty is unduly restricted, and the development of individuality retarded.

The question has been very fully discussed for a generation, but it may be well to emphasise once more by illustration and explanation the import of the claim. It is the undoubted lesson of history that so long as a population is debarred from the land (and capital), the workers as a class are liable to become slaves or servants to the landowners or capitalists. That this is inevitable can perhaps be most easily understood when we compare the position of a workman, temporarily or permanently out of work in a country where he has nothing, not even the workhouse, to fall back upon, and the position of a similar workman

in a country where there are stretches of fertile soil to which he can return, and, with the aid of a little capital provided for the purpose, make for himself a livelihood, however primitive. Such a man gains independence through this power of access to land and capital: but the unemployed in a country where there is no such access must always in the end take what wages are offered, and if none are offered must be supported by charity or starve. And let me make it clear that even in this country, where the right to the charity of the state is admitted, this question becomes a practical problem to many. Illustrations are common enough: the day after I had written this, a typical case was brought before me. An intelligent labourer in a neighbouring village, seeing no prospect of improvement for the labourers on the land, managed to get his son some slight training as a carpenter. This son is now in London, and having a few weeks back lost his somewhat casual employment, must now, unless assisted, decide this very question. His resources absolutely exhausted, he, his wife, and the children will have—unless help is sent—to enter the workhouse and be kept at the cost of the State. Had the man access to a bit of land and a little capital, he could without doubt support himself and bring up happy children. The people are thoroughly respectable; his only fault is poverty, a misfortune which may come to any one. But the fact that land and capital are administered in private instead of public

interest debars him from the right to return to mother earth, and to live a free life on the soil. Of course, in these days, this side of our question is often surrounded by complications, and the position is modified on the one hand by the fact that all the more skilled workmen obtain a power of resistance to economic laws by their combination in trades unions, and on the other by the growing recognition of the duty of the State to find employment for all. But the principle remains untouched: a share in mother earth—as much land as a man can cultivate himself with a limited access to capital must become the recognised birthright of every man before real freedom can be obtained.

THE RIGHT TO A HOME

It is the man's right to a home, the power to withdraw from the markets of commerce, and to work for himself and his children that is in question. When this is clearly admitted, greater personal freedom will be assured, and our populations will be brought into a position of independence that will give solidarity to the State. Our ideal in land reform, therefore, should be recognition of the principle of the home—of the principle that every one has a right to a plot of land, to tools and to all that is necessary to start him as a free worker on the land. It would be well if the State were concretely represented in every man's mind by the house and land which the State would

provide for him. Thus would be constituted that mutual confidence between the individual and the community which is so wanting in civilised countries. Some steps have been taken in this direction, for even at the present time the right of public authorities to take the land over when required for public uses, including, in this country, the provision of homes and land for the people, has been admitted: this right has to be extended until the individual's claim to a share of the land becomes incontestable. Thus we shall have enlarged the boundaries of the peoples' liberties.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Even when this right to the land is obtained and exercised it will be at once seen that your citizen, if penniless, has not greatly improved his position. He is powerless without a little capital to develop his land, and to live until he obtains the fruits of the earth. If, therefore, you grant the right of access to land, unless you deny the right of a man to live, you grant by implication the man's claims to at least a little capital. Even if you send him to the workhouse he is exercising his right, for he lives on the wealth of the nation: indeed, in dealing with the citizen of the poorest class of all, this practical question constantly arises—are you to use the national capital to keep him alive in a workhouse? thereby punishing him for his poverty, caused in *the main by* economic conditions, or will you

provide him with a little capital to try to build up his own position. The money must be provided one way or the other, if the man is to be kept alive. To the worker of the next poorest class (in this country represented by perhaps eight millions of people), the man who, whilst not an actual pauper, has only his labour to sell, and for that is paid the lowest living wage, the same line of argument applies: if he is to improve his position access to capital is almost a necessity. Such a man can perhaps manage to save by underfeeding himself, his wife, or his children, or through the labour of wife and children, but such courses are, as a general rule, undesirable; moreover, if he saves a little he is liable to become again pauperised if you leave him to the mercy of the money-lender. There is therefore a strong case for adding to our recognition of a common right to land, a right of access to capital.

THE POSITION OF PRESENT HOLDERS

It is not necessary at this point to analyse the title of the present holders of wealth, for the idea of absolute ownership is gradually waning from the minds of those who see the moral basis of society, and few continue to desire that the possession of land and capital should remain the prerogative of the few. It is also obvious to everyone that the property now accumulated by the really wealthy classes of this country (about 1½ per cent. of the population with property estimated at about £6,000,000,000) is in the

main the outcome of the work of innumerable people; moreover, in the larger number of cases, the present owners have had little connection with the actual producers, and have, in fact, obtained their wealth mainly by some accident of fate. Under the circumstances it can hardly be denied that these owners' moral claim is shadowy, and it will generally be admitted that they hold their wealth as trustees for those whose needs are greater.

The matter is thus dealt with from another aspect in the Encyclical of the Pan Anglican Conference of Bishops issued in 1888: "It will contribute no little to draw together the various classes of society if the clergy endeavour, in sermons and lectures, to set forth the true principles of society, showing how property is a trust to be administered for the good of humanity."

This interpretation of Christianity will gain ground, and people will cease to allege a moral claim to property which is the fruit of the labour of others.

Everyone's right of access to land and capital is therefore based on necessity, and supported by morality; it is hardly probable that this will now be seriously contested, and when this is more clearly understood and admitted, the State's duty to aid the weak in supporting their claim against the present owners clearly follows.

THE PRACTICAL PROBLEM

We have now to discuss how far these rights have been and *can* be put into force in England, and, in

doing so, it is well to realise that the practical application of the principle involves some special difficulties when applied to a population such as ours, of which a large section has, by the very denial of this right, been degraded in life and character: but this is no reason against proceeding with a remedial policy based on a sound principle.

Something has been done already in England to free our producers and would-be producers from the grip of landowner and capitalist; but the practical solution of the matter involves difficulties. It is widely agreed that the interest of a nation is best served when the freehold land belongs to the nation, and is administered in the public interest. Nevertheless, we are taking no drastic steps in that direction, for in England we progress soberly, and our soil is being nationalised only by small degrees. The position now stands thus. The right of public bodies to acquire land for all public purposes, including in that term housing the people and providing land for small holdings, is admitted by all political parties, and incorporated in innumerable Acts of Parliament. The right is limited by all sorts of administrative formalities, which will doubtless be gradually simplified. The Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1907, is a good example of an Act of Parliament embodying both the principles and the formalities. This Act, which is at the present time (1908) causing much excitement in the villages, is undoubtedly a *step in* advance, though it will not of itself cause a

revolution. It definitely directs the local councils to find land for applicants, and it is probable that the people will take the opportunity to form village associations possibly on the lines indicated in the last chapter; indeed, the Act can hardly be worked without some such organisation. Thus the people will, at the same time, obtain land and learn the value of common action, and thereby ultimately secure independence.

The present Parliament and Government have also admitted the principle that the price of acquirement should no longer be a fancy one, but should be based on the value at which the land is assessed for purpose of taxation. It is therefore no longer necessary in England to argue for the right of access to land as against the right of private owners; landowners are clearly now only looked on either as holders with limited rights, or as trustees for the public. We have now to proceed with the application of our principles, and, in doing so, it is well to realise that we must aim at the reform of the system, not at punishing individual landholders. Their class rights have been affirmed for many generations, and although it seems clear that this was done in the first instance in error, there is an implied contract between the landlords and the State, and just as, in the past, we compensated the slave-holders, we shall now do well generously to compensate the landowners. The matter requires most careful adjustment, and the first practical step must be the complete re-valuation of the freehold

interest in the land. It is unnecessary here to deal with all the complications of land valuation ; but the value of the land, apart from buildings upon it and improvements in it, sometimes called the "site value," or "prairie value," or simply the "land value," must be clearly settled. The matter is not entirely easy, but there are no difficulties which cannot be overcome : indeed, land valuers are accustomed to deal with this point in ordinary practice. Moreover, it may be pointed out that the system of thus valuing the land, apart from buildings and improvements, has been in operation for some years in New Zealand and some of the Australian colonies,[1] and is partially dealt with by the Agricultural Rating Act. A concurrent necessary step to any dealing with the land in the country should be intervention, when asked for, to bring about the readjustment of farmers' rent in accordance with its just amount, and not its competitive value ; but as we do not want to make permanent the present land system, there is no reason for giving fixity of tenure. How this fixing of rent can be done without great difficulty is indicated in the report on the Royal Commission on Agriculture (1893-1897).[2] It would be, doubtless, necessary to have a land court available for the purpose of settling all difficulties arising in the course of the valuations. It will be necessary, when dealing with these matters, to take into consideration the

[1] "Parliamentary Paper, Cd. 3191, 1906."

[2] *See Mr. Gilbert* Murray's evidence in App. A, xviii., vol. i.

wages of labour. I shall later on deal with this important question, and show that the further raising of the labourer's wage is a necessary step in the reconstruction of country life, and may come quickly. This variation in one of the costs of production cannot, in justice, fall on the farmer, and would therefore be reflected in a reduction of the rent. For it is obvious that the more the farmer has to pay in wages, the less he can pay in rent. When these adjustments had been fairly and systematically made we should obtain the true value of the land, and, after making allowances for buildings and improvements, the landlord's interest in it would be fixed. Thus we should remove one of the most curious anomalies of our rating system, under which a plot of land may be valued for sale by the owner at many hundreds of pounds per acre, and yet rated at the few pounds or even shillings per acre at which it may temporarily be let. The relation of this system of valuation to the acquisition of land by a public authority is thus referred to by the Select Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes Acts Amendment Bill (11th December, 1906). "No solution of the question will be satisfactory that does not enable a local authority to purchase land compulsorily for any public purpose (including housing, drainage, small holdings, etc.), upon the basis of rateable value. The present system under which land is rated by a local authority upon one valuation, but can only be purchased by the same authority

upon another valuation, having no necessary or recognised proportion to the first, seems to them (the Committee) both complicated and unjust." From every point of view re-valuation is therefore necessary. And the freeholder's true interest, his "just price," as it would have been called at one time, once computed, any further increase of value arising from increase of population, from the carrying out of the policy of the revival of country life, or the improvement of prices, should pass not to the landlord, nor to the farmer, but either directly to the State or to the locality represented by the parish or county council.

In fixing the just price for the land for the purpose both of rating and sale, basing it on the rent, which itself will be modified by the rise in wages for the labourer, the question arises whether it is fair that this fall in value should be borne by the landlord. It is argued that no compensation to factory owners was given when we prevented sweating by factory regulation, nor would it be just to give landlords the benefit of the inflated value of their land arising from the underpaid condition of the labourer. On the other hand, we have to realise that much of the poorer agricultural land has no "site value" at present, and also that much land is over-burdened with rent charges, mortgages, and annuities, and that substantial injustice will arise to the freeholder if his perhaps small margin of income is destroyed by this *method. In my* judgment generosity of treatment

to the landlords may be the wiser policy, and in addition to the reduced capital value paid on any purchase by the State or local authority a personal compensation might be given by way of State annuity, lasting during the life of the present freeholder and any of his immediate relations strictly dependent on the land. In any case the great point is to fix the landlord's interest in the land. He would then be somewhat in the position of the holder of a perpetual ground rent, and as the land improved his security be that much greater.

The landlord's just price having thus been fixed it is only reasonable that the State should meet any landlord who wished to relinquish his land and withdraw from an anomalous position, and take over his property, paying in land bonds created for the purpose, and subsequently, I hope, transfer it to the parish.

The price once fixed, any local authority requiring land for allotments, small holdings, housing, or any purpose that is deemed useful for the re-settlement of the land, or the promotion of advantage to the locality, would be able to purchase accordingly. Moreover, by turning up the parish map the exact value of any field they might require would be seen: at that value they could purchase, paying, in addition, if the case required it, compensation for severance. This compensation, in taking a field out of a farm, might be prohibitive, and in that case the local authority should be called on to elect between

purchasing the whole farm or choosing some other plot. I apprehend, moreover, that on the death of existing owners the tendency would be for the land to pass into the hands of the local authorities, and indeed the law might direct (in the event of death without direct heirs) the executors or trustees of the deceased holder to make an offer to the local authority. It is, of course, a national misfortune that the nation should have let the land slip out of its own hands, and allowed it to pass into the hands of private owners: but the law has for many generations confirmed their rights, and all that can now be done is to resume the land as quickly as possible without injustice to interests so long recognised.

By the scheme outlined in this chapter, most of the details of which have been accepted by progressive thinkers, we shall arrive at a position under which the State itself and every local authority has a definite right to purchase land at a definite price. All the obscurities that now surround the question will be in the main removed. The State and local authorities, at any rate, will have access to the land, and into their hands it would gradually pass. It will remain for them to utilise this power to promote the re-settlement of the land and the reconstruction of our country life. This they would do, realising that the justice of the case consisted in rendering to each man what was appropriate to him, trying to provide for every man a home with fixity of tenure and reasonable and fixed rent, but without right of sale.

The local authority should retain the power to resume control of the land on death of the tenant, a right which should not be enforced without due regard to the interests of his wife, his children, and of the public. A permanent home for a man and his issue must be secured.

As a further practical point I think it of the greatest importance that the public authority to hold the land in a parish should be the parish itself, acting through its council. The overlapping of various authorities may be temporarily necessary, but for reasons which I have set out in the chapter on the creation of a community, it is to be hoped that the land of each parish will be vested in the parish.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

I turn now to the question of access to capital.

When you come to the practical application of the right of access to capital, you see that you have either to give money away,[1] or lend on the security of a mere promise of repayment guaranteed perhaps by the borrower's friends. Most people would imagine that such lending to the poor would result in financial loss. It is one of the romances of finance that such personal security has been found to be the soundest security known. The money-lenders have known this for many a generation, and have made

[1] This is of course the present way—the method pursued in innumerable cases of poverty through charitable societies and our poor law system.

their fortunes accordingly. Abroad this is so well recognised that Europe is covered with loan societies financing the poor on these terms, and the general report is that there are no defaulters. For example, the Raiffeissen Agricultural Banks Association of Germany, founded in 1849, and now carried on in some three thousand centres, lends money to small people on personal security; in fifty years they never lost a penny. The fact is, that amongst the agricultural classes scrupulous honesty is the rule.

Fifty years later, these loan societies are being introduced into England, with some slight hope of support from the Government. It is a movement of the utmost importance, as an accessory to the right of access to land. I therefore give a short description of such a society in the form that seems to me best suited for adoption in this country. The loan society, sometimes called "a credit bank," is generally founded for the express object of providing money to be lent to agricultural labourers, small holders, and farmers to develop their land. The basis of it is a union of individuals comprising both those who are interested in the scheme and wish to support it, and those who want money for the purposes of agriculture. The business should be controlled by a manager and committee appointed by the members; any member requiring money for manure, for the purchase of seed, for ploughing, or any other similar purpose applies to the manager for the amount he requires, stating the purpose for

which he needs it. A member of the Committee, or, better still, a recognised agricultural adviser or specialist appointed by the Government, the County Council, the Parish Council, or the society itself would take the matter up, see exactly what the would-be borrower wants, give him advice if need be, and generally satisfy himself that the expenditure was likely to be remunerative; he would then recommend the advance to the Committee. The Committee would, from their knowledge of the man's character, decide whether he was to be trusted, and would have the word of the member of the Committee or the agricultural specialist that the expenditure was likely to be a wise one; the loan would be decided on accordingly. Great care should be taken to avoid red tape and fuss, and to do everything in the simplest possible way. This is an outline of the system; there are many matters of detail, on the arrangement of which the success of the society depends. A skilled salaried official agricultural adviser, who gives his services to the applicant without charge, is a valuable help to a loan society, and is, indeed, an almost essential feature of any scheme for the revival of agriculture; one is wanted for every district, so that he may always be available for practical advice. I deal more fully with this point in a later chapter. Then the loan society should be in connection with, and preferably a branch of, a society formed on the lines of the village land club, described later on in this book.

another branch of the same club will be the local co-operative society, amongst whose functions would be the buying of stock, seed, etc., on behalf of its members. The Committee of the bank would then be in a position to see when seed, manure, fertiliser, or stock was to be purchased, that the most suitable article was bought through the co-operative society at the best possible price.

To turn to other points. The loan society may, of course, be financed by the Government, or by a philanthropic person, or it might be financed through the funds of a savings' bank, trades-union, or co-operative society. In England a Central Bank will be formed for this purpose. If the money has to be borrowed by the society, the German system might be adopted, under which all members are jointly responsible for the loan of the initial capital. This guarantees that money will be carefully administered, whilst on the other hand the liability thus undertaken by members does not seem to be very serious. As before stated, the German Raiffeissen Banks have never had any losses; a similar report comes from the Irish credit banks with two hundred branches, and the few English societies already established.

The loan of money is usually limited to members only; and, as a rule, it is to be used only for the purchase of manure, seeds, feeding stuffs, sheep, cows, pigs and poultry, fruit trees, greenhouses, etc., but loans are also sometimes given to tradesmen and to encourage local industries. It is often desirable

that such limitations should be so far done away with as to permit loans for certain other purposes. For instance, many small holders and small traders in England have borrowed money from money-lenders and dealers, and it is very desirable that arrangements should be made for clearing off these exacting creditors, if the people are to be put into a stable condition. In Hungary, Italy, and other European countries the money-lenders have thus been done away with. It is also most desirable that funds should be available for bringing small industries out of the towns, and establishing them in the country, thus aiding the formation of a country population.

As a further practical point, it is usual for every applicant for a loan to be asked to find one or more friends who are willing to guarantee repayments. Loans being usually of small amount and repayable by instalments, the liability of the guarantors is not serious, but the system creates a social pressure on the borrower. Every Loan Society should be registered under the Friendly Societies Act, 1896; this confers certain legal privileges and saves certain expenses. These are the most important details that require attention.

It is of interest to refer to an account given by Mr. R. N. Sutton Neethorp, of the Scawby Agricultural Credit Society, and published by the Agricultural Organisation Society. This is the first loan society started in England on the lines described. This account states that, during the first ten years of its

existence, the society lent £1,032 in thirty-eight loans of from £5 to £50. No losses have been made; interest at 6 per cent. is charged. The small yearly profit is carried to a reserve fund which will eventually provide a certain amount of capital. The loans have been chiefly made to small occupiers of land, enabling them to increase their stock when prices were favourable, or to hold it and their produce over when prices were bad. Small tradesmen also have availed themselves of loans so as to be able to purchase material at ready money prices, and women have been borrowers for the establishment of some small enterprise. I understand that Scawby is not a very suitable place for the work of such a society, as there are few small holders and no local industries; the success of this enterprise is thus specially interesting. In other places the business might well be carried on on a larger scale. We also learn from this report on Scawby that at first there was great reluctance in taking out loans, but that this is being rapidly got over, and it is now recognised that the society is a sound business concern, and not a charity in disguise; it is worth again emphasising that there have been no losses.

The foundation and extension of these loan societies are the only method of providing access to capital which seems at present practical. It is possible that great developments will take place in these directions within the next few years. The principle has, at any rate, been put into a practical form, and having been thus exemplified will become more widely understood.

CHAPTER III

THE REGULATION OF MARKETS

IN the last chapter we showed how we could, by fixing the land values and thus the land owners' interest, secure that any further increase in the value of land due to the revival of country life or any other extraneous causes should not pass to the freeholders. Nor would the landlords be able to obtain any increased rent arising from the results of farmers' labour in improving cultivation. We have now to see that the cultivators' just profits do not get lost in the competition of markets, and we must therefore proceed to consider the question of regulation of markets. To this matter I attach much importance, as I feel certain that if we are to attract our people back to the land we must free the hands of our producers from the interminable worries connected with the sale of their produce, and leave them free to give their best energies to the work of production: we can then expect and shall doubtless obtain far better results from the soil than we do at present.

Now, even the most casual student of our methods of sale and distribution cannot fail to see that the system is extraordinarily corrupt, wasteful and

unsatisfactory both to the producer and to the consumer.

The economics of the matter is in essence simple. The producer wishes to obtain, without a great waste of time in bargaining and other forms of negotiation, a price for his produce that will reasonably repay him for the cost of production. It will be generally agreed that it is in the interest of the State that he should on the whole obtain this price, though some rigid economists will doubtless argue that he is only entitled to receive the market price fixed by the law of supply and demand. It will be seen that the small producer often fails to obtain even the latter.

The consumer, on the other hand, wishes to purchase his food as cheaply as possible, but it will be generally agreed that it is not his ultimate interest to obtain it at a price that will not pay the cost of production. Such a course will tend to impoverish the nation, increasing poor rates and taxes, and, in short, will kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. The interest of producer and consumer, when both of one nation,[1] are indeed clearly identical, for they are both in harmony with the interest of the State, which claims that every man should be in a position to live a reasonably happy, healthy life, and to earn a sufficient income for the proper maintenance of a family.

But the interest of the traders who come between

[1] These interests are also, I think, identical when they belong to different nations, but it would take much space to argue *this here.*

producer and consumer is essentially different, neither do I see that it can be harmonised without very radical alterations. I have no reason to attack the middleman: for many years I was one myself, and I consider this avocation requires character and organising capacity that might be invaluable to the State. Many dealers are scrupulously honest, but it must be confessed that most of them complain of the sharp practices of their competitors. One must realise that the business is not free from temptations, indeed it is often demoralising and degrading; it is also competitive, difficult, and speculative, and has none of the charms of a productive business. Therefore, we must not blame the middleman if he makes it his essential object to buy in the cheapest and to sell in the dearest market: to force down the producer's price and keep up the price paid by the consumer. This is the history of most individual transactions, and it is sound business, but so long as this is so, his interest cannot be harmonised with the interest either of the producer or of the consumer. The evil is, of course, increased by competition amongst dealers, which tends to encourage sharp practices. It is therefore in the best interest of all parties that the middleman's business should be freed from this element of self-interest, and that matters should be so arranged that the necessary intermediaries between producer and consumer are simply conduit pipes gathering and distributing, free from all financial interest in prices; it is desirable, however,

that they should, if possible, be interested in securing and improving the quality of the article passing through their hands, and they may, perhaps, be usefully employed in assisting the fixing of a fair price.

To emphasise the necessity of such an economic readjustment, I will discuss a little in detail the present market systems. The evils are flagrant, and on the increase, and they press most severely on the small cultivators and those whose financial position is not strong: the people, in fact, one wants to help. Now, whether you study methods of sale of corn, cattle, hay, fruit, vegetables, or flowers, there can be no doubt that not only do all cultivators (except a few large farmers) sell through a dealer at great personal disadvantage, owing to their slighter knowledge of markets and their comparative want of skill in bargaining, but many of the transactions are tainted with fraud. According to A. G. L. Rogers, in his "Business Side of Agriculture," markets in agricultural produce are constantly subject to rigging, prices are driven down by unscrupulous speculators, and even in small markets advantage is taken by small buyers to make purchases at prices far below the real value of the article. Often wheat is lowered in price by the gambling in options and futures, and in markets butchers may form a ring and agree not to bid against one another, with a result that beasts are sold at ridiculous prices to members of the "knock out" gang.

The result of sales in markets for our flowers and

fruit and vegetables is notorious: a typical case is described in a letter dated 14th August, 1907, by Mr. A. C. Wilkin, of Tiptree, to the *Daily News*, from which I quote the following paragraph: "On one occasion I determined to know the cause why my peas always made bad prices compared with published reports. I suspected the G.E.R. of late delivery, and therefore hunted for lodgings in the neighbourhood of Brick Lane. The best I could find was a fourpenny doss-house. Twenty ruffians sang and crowed till past midnight in my room, but as the Shoreditch clock struck three I made my exit, and no end of strenuous efforts to get my peas dispatched. There were a score of heavily-laden trains in front of the 'Kelvedon goods.' Half-past four struck, and a waggon started towards Covent Garden. As usual, each narrow street was blocked with innumerable waggons. I waited with impatience till eight o'clock; would you believe it? The best buyers were gone, but the coster-mongers were on the look-out for bargains, and in five minutes 'a rummage sale' had been conducted! What would London do without these scavengers? To her shame, be it said, there is no other way apparently of reaching the mass of consumers. Shop prices are very high. The present condition of the London markets is one of the chief causes of stagnation in the home counties."

Mr. Rider Haggard also, in his "Rural England," gives very many examples of the difficulties arising

from the confusion of markets and the practices of the various dealers and merchants.

All this acts even more to the prejudice of the small holder than of the large farmer: and is liable to become even more serious if the competition between small holders increases.

Moreover, the producer is often hit in another way. There is good reason to suppose that a large proportion of small cultivators, and many larger ones, are without sufficient capital to work their lands and are liable to be short of money, often at crucial moments. Modern joint stock banks are chary of advancing money on crops, though there is still a certain amount of this business done by them. Few credit banks are yet started. The result is thus stated in C. A. Pratt's "Re-organisation of Agriculture": "In almost every agricultural district in Great Britain farmers or cultivators of the smaller class are practically in the hands of commission men or brokers, who advance money to them before their crops are ready, and afterwards get the produce at substantially less than its legitimate value."

Illustrations of such practices are also given in Mr. Rider Haggard's work. For example, in the hop trade it is not at all uncommon for factors to lend farmers money to pay for the picking, subsequently securing the crops at a low price. A practice of dealers who sell store cattle to farmers on credit at a high price, and repurchase, when fattened, at their own price, is also recorded. The farmer is

thus reversing the usual order of things: he buys in the dearest and sells in the cheapest market. Many of the dealers have been or are themselves farmers, and consequently often in close touch with their fellows and especially able to take advantage of their misfortunes. Any one who knows anything of a trader's business has come into contact with such practices. The middleman is not necessarily to blame. There is considerable competition amongst dealers, and farmers often doubtless ask for loans; the trader knows that if he refuses one of his competitors may step in. The evils arise from the abuse of the competitive system and the farmer's want of capital. But whatever the cause, it will be seen that the moment the cultivator gets short of money, the market conditions unfairly combine to bleed him.

Moreover, a cultivator of varied and exceptional ability is at once faced with exceptional difficulties. He utilises his land to best advantage and grows corn, fruit, vegetables, and flowers; he keeps cattle, sheep, pigs, and fowls. He has a corresponding number of markets to deal with; he ought, if he is to succeed, to keep himself conversant with the extraordinarily complicated customs of all these markets. This, if he does it, takes time and money which could better be employed in other ways. For my part I feel certain that he rarely makes himself master of trade details. I doubt if many small cultivators clearly grasp the adjustments of

the "measure and weight" or "weighed measure" system of selling wheat, or the "average" system of computing prices on sale of surplus stores at Covent Garden Market, or can even judge the weight of his fat beast. Such varied ability is rarely required in other trades.

This is not all: direct supply, which could in any case be only a partial remedy, has often other special drawbacks. In selling to large clubs, hotels, or even private houses, there are many people who expect commissions, and if they are not given, the goods are condemned. Corruption of this type, though illegal, is extremely common. I remember a case (the details of which I do not guarantee), mentioned in one of the poultry papers, of a co-operative egg distributing agency which offered to provide an hotel with new-laid eggs at, I think, one shilling a dozen all the year round. The estimate was not accepted, and they supplied the eggs to a merchant, who himself supplied the hotel at a considerably higher price; the difference was doubtless distributed into many pockets. I remember also a remark made by a dealer I knew in relation to a certain place of business. "If," he said, "I wish to supply that house, I prefer to employ an Armenian Jew." The remark was pregnant.

These are not the only evils that affect our trade in food. Great complaints are made of inferior goods being sold under well-known names. This, again, arises from competition between dealers, shopkeepers,

etc., many of whom unfortunately can scarcely make a living in absolutely honest employment. For example, in the bacon trade, Wiltshire manufacturers complained to Mr. Rider Haggard of the frequent frauds of which they were the victims, and of sale by English merchants and shopkeepers of quantities of hams and bacon as "best Wilts," which were never in England until they passed through it in a railway train. Undoubtedly foreign meat is frequently sold as English, and similar complaints are heard in the cheese trade.

Nor is this all. The price paid by the consumer is often out of proportion to that obtained by the producer; for example, the difference between the wholesale and retail price of milk may amount to 8d. a gallon, and I have noted cases of an increase in fruit of 300 per cent. Again, owing to market mismanagement, fruit and flowers, for which there may be a large *bona fide* demand in some other part of the country, may be sold in London at a price which does not pay the cost of picking.

Lastly, there is the question of adulteration which less directly affects the producers. I observe that in Sir J. Crichton Browne's speech to the Sanitary Inspectors' Association Annual (1907) Conference, he said there was scarcely an article of our food that was not tampered with now and then, and he pointed out that methods of corruption were becoming more and more subtle. He specially mentioned our milk supplies. The adulteration of our milk supplies,

whilst passing through the hands of dealers and shopkeepers, is well known. It is possible that fifteen per cent. of the milk sold is unsuited for human consumption, and is largely responsible for the high death rate amongst young children.

All these difficulties are, of course, aggravated by the uncertainty of prices of crops and stock arising from foreign and internal competition and speculation by dealers.

This uncertainty and dishonesty in the markets is perhaps the greatest of all the evils which affect the agriculturist, and it must be remedied. To it I attribute not only the greater part of the farmers' financial difficulties, but also the persistent reduction in the number of small holdings;[1] a reduction which has, it will be remembered, continued up to the end of 1906.

Make clear to a man that if his produce is good his market is secure, he will at once see where his advantage lies. His interest will direct his energy, for he knows that his work will have its reward. I feel sure that it is this certainty of market, quite as much as his capacity for co-operation, that makes the Danish farmer so successful in production.

[1] The position of the small holder is, of course, complicated by the fact that if he develops any speciality for which there is a good market and fair margin of profit, the capitalist will be likely to take advantage of his enterprise, and by carrying on the same business in competition on a larger scale, may *either cut* the small holder out of the market altogether or *reduce him by competition* to a condition of poverty.

In England it is quite sufficient struggle for a man to deal with the difficulties of climate; the gambling, speculative, uncertain element in the business causes endless anxiety and suffering, and wears away the lives of many of our best men and women.

This mass of corruption and mismanagement is, moreover, a national disgrace. It reflects both on our honesty and on our capacity. It must be dealt with by radical change, for the evil is inseparable from the present competitive system of middlemen, and no mere modification will affect it.

THE CO-OPERATIVE SYSTEM

The present system will be defended only by those who, hynotised by the phrase "survival of the fittest," endeavour to deduce from it a theory that by unregulated competition the finest human beings survive. No possible twisting of the Darwinian theory can bring it into accord with such a view. Darwin himself indicated that those who combined best were more likely to survive, and modern scientific thought has followed this line.

It is probably this that has led the less superficial thinkers to emphasise the advantages of the co-operative system of distribution, which has had great influence in reorganising agriculture in countries on the Continent doing an export business.

This system in its best form works somewhat as follows—taking again the case of the egg trade. A number of farmers and cottagers in a district combine

into a co-operative society: the members are generally shareholders to a small amount. The primary function of the organisation will be to start a depot at a railway station where all the eggs produced by its members would be collected, the society paying a uniform price for all eggs of the same quality. This price depends on the market price of the day. This wholesale buying price in England would probably average about 1s. a dozen, taking one month with another, for new laid eggs of a good size, the price varying from perhaps 9d. a dozen in April to 1s. 9d. in November. The sale price would vary perhaps from 1s. a dozen in April to 2s. a dozen in November, allowing a margin of 3d. a dozen for expenses of distribution. The members of the association would pledge themselves to send all their eggs and only new laid eggs; moreover, all sent would be so marked that the farmer supplying could be immediately traced and fined on sending a bad egg. At the depot the larger eggs would probably be sorted out from the smaller, and all eggs carefully packed and consigned either to an egg merchant, or to large or small consumers. Such a society could probably do something towards solving the difficulties of transit, and make reasonable terms with the railway companies for transfer of produce. The co-operative society may or may not supplement this distributive process by employing a permanent or occasional adviser who would give the members information as to the best fowls, the best methods, and best ap-

pliances. Such appliances may be purchased by or through the association for its members at wholesale prices, and this advising and purchasing for its members is one of the most important functions of the society, as the farmer is liable to be defrauded in his purchases both as regards quality and prices. Moreover, as before mentioned, when the members are poor, such an association might be in touch with an agricultural loan society, who could advance the cost of the appliances; the society would probably also undertake the preservation of fresh eggs from summer to winter—a lucrative branch of the business. Similar organisations have been formed for almost all other classes of agricultural produce. The system has many advantages, and at its best is an admirable example of what can be done with organisation and mutual help. In England the movement is encouraged by the Agricultural Organisation Society, and the National Poultry Organisation Society, and will probably now be supported by the Government: in a later chapter I show how it should be combined with other movements in village land clubs, and so made invaluable. In a sense the movement is philanthropic, and it is here worth remarking that in its present form it is based on a slight inherent injustice: it makes a definite effort to destroy without compensation the livelihood of the dealers who are the merchants and bankers of the smaller cultivators. I grasped the nature of this proceeding when I came to discuss this matter with these people. There is

an inherent defect in any organisation based on injustice which will destroy it in time. And in this case this element of injustice indicates the weak point of the co-operative system. As the co-operative societies utilise their stronger position to destroy the small dealers, so may enlarged competition degrade, and finally destroy, the co-operative societies.

But these societies have very great advantages, and are a step in the right direction. Their arrangements for collecting, grading, and distributing are far ahead of anything that has been initiated by the farmers themselves. And even if they do not solve all our problems, they may go far to do so, and from them may evolve a more perfect system.

It appears that the system is seen at its greatest advantage in a country like Denmark. Here all cultivators are working practically for the same markets, and a certain firmness of prices makes possible competition between the various farmers a small matter. But Denmark's successes have indicated what are the inherent defects of the system and why it lacks finality. The Danish system has no world-wide patent: in the butter market Denmark has a start, but already Sweden and other countries are intervening, and there will be competition between countries having the same general advantages of system: thus no country will have any permanent advantage: and the pressure of competition may finally come on the back of the unfortunate peasants and *farmers, and gradually* grind them down to a state

of want. Acute organised competition is liable to set in at any time: it may be just as destructive to the producer's price as the unorganised competition which has destroyed the profits of growing wheat, and in other ways affected all agricultural producers. Even in Denmark, I have been told, some of the people are already unable to afford their own butter and eggs, but purchase an inferior quality from Russia. This may be "good for trade," but is surely a miserable result. There is very good reason to suppose that the lives of many small holders in Belgium, Switzerland, and some parts of Norway, Sweden and Denmark are becoming increasingly unsatisfactory, and that notwithstanding their admirable co-operative organisations.[1] The Denmark societies are also using their own reputation and knowledge of the trade to purchase the butter of their competitors, reconsigning it to the English markets. It is hardly likely that this can last.

In England, where the farmer is at the mercy of the producers of the world, it would be unwise to ignore the fact that the competition may be exceptionally severe. This the co-operators, however organised, will be powerless to resist: and they will probably join in the demand for a return to protection, over which a protracted wrangle will waste another quarter of a century. Concurrently

[1] This view is confirmed by the opinions of Mr. Erik Givskov, a Norwegian gentleman who lectured in London in the autumn of 1907.

the English co-operators may compete amongst themselves, and also with the partially displaced individual dealers. But in any case, the final general result of acute, unregulated international competition, co-operation or no co-operation, would be the reduction of the price paid to the producer.

The fact is that (on the side of its selling department) the co-operative society is only a very good class of middleman, it combines the interest of a group of producers and does it admirably: but it will not solve all difficulties: for, after all, it does not regulate prices, and indeed is only a superior sort of trust: it wants to make profits for itself as does any other middleman. And it does not prevent a war of prices with other societies or dealers or trusts controlling production in our own or other countries.

Shortly, therefore, the weak points of the co-operative system are these: (1) As a market organisation it has not the essential feature of permanency, as it is liable to break down under the stress of competition. (2) It has the middleman's defect of trying to charge the consumer as high a price as possible, instead of the just price. (3) It gives to the producer the market price, but not necessarily the price that will pay him, and does not prevent his being squeezed down by the competition of markets. In all other respects co-operation seems to me admirable. It is clearly the *system which* we should work for and adopt, and

even if it is not final it will have a great immediate effect in improving conditions, and all its best points must be included in the general scheme.

A POLICY FOR THE FUTURE

I have now indicated the difficulties of the present unregulated system, and the evils of market fluctuations, and I have shown that the co-operative system will not necessarily provide a complete remedy. It is not reasonable to leave the matter under the shadow of destructive criticism only, so I suggest for consideration a policy for the future, which I fancy is economically sound, and which might be gradually applied to the ultimate remedy of all the evils. Let us again state clearly our object. It is desirable to build up an organisation for collecting our food supplies from the producer, and distributing to the consumer as quickly, honestly, and efficiently as possible. It should be the direct interest of such an organisation to charge the consumer a fair price, and to pay the producer a just price, that is, a price which will leave him a sufficient margin of profit, and thus encourage him in his work: it must therefore not be complicated by the middleman's quite natural desire to buy as cheaply as possible and sell as dearly as possible, and thus make a profit for himself, the evils of which, in relation to the nation's food, have already, I hope, been made clear. Moreover, we must not forget that as our great object is to reconstruct town and country life our plans

must have their place in the general scheme having that object. It should also be permanent in form, and free from the evils of competition in price. With these points in mind it may be possible to devise a scheme which, by its very justice, will quickly disarm all opposition.[1]

I have considered the systems of dealing with produce under the guild system which eliminated competition and produced such remarkable results in mediæval times in improved quality of production and prosperity, and have given thought to such information as I have been able to obtain of interesting experiments made in Hungary, Denmark, South Australia, and elsewhere, and have considered the trend of modern development. I am now inclined to believe that if we are to avoid all this mismanagement and corruption, and completely to free the producer from anxieties so as to permit him to give full play to his individuality in the work of production, and so to secure the food necessary for the nation, it will be wise for the State at some not very distant time to intervene. It might then substitute for the present varied and admittedly unsatisfactory methods a Government department to supplement the work of co-operation by gradually taking over the administration of all the wholesale businesses at present existing for dealing with

[1] I feel confident that no system of protection, in the ordinary sense, would do much towards the solution of these questions, and would increase, in all probability, the trade corruption and uncertainty of prices.

supplies that we ourselves produce, together with the import trade in the same competing products. The nation would then proceed to administer for the national interest alone.

There is no doubt that many will consider this an unjust interference with personal rights: but it cannot be denied that in this connection the competitive trading system has failed, and the co-operative system may show itself to be inadequate. Neither can I see that this revision of system into a State organisation can do otherwise than encourage the best type of individuality. Surely, then, we are entirely justified in putting aside the personal considerations and raising our discussion to a higher plane: we appeal from the morality of successful self-aggrandisement to the Christian conscience, and thus from selfish interests to the wider rights of the public. It is in the interests of the public that this proposal is made, and it is important in considering it to realise the necessity of employing the strongest force at our command to deal with this extremely complicated question; it should also be remembered that the question is inherently national and not local, so central and not local government alone is able to deal with it.

Moreover, such intervention has the advantage of putting the important question of food supplies once for all outside the sphere of corruption and private greed and speculation. The trade has grown enormously, and is now really too great and too

important to be within the scope of private dealers' operations.

I suggest, in outline, for consideration and criticism, a scheme which, when perfected, might, I think, work without difficulty.

Having taken over all the present middlemen's businesses between producer and consumer, including, in all probability, the carrying trade in all its branches, the department would gradually simplify them. Then it would establish, throughout the country, depots, preferably at the village public halls referred to in Chapter VI., and managed so far as possible by the village clubs or parish councils, so as to create local responsibility. At these depots would be bought, daily, home produce alike from small and large producer or co-operative society representing a group of producers, at a just scale of prices fixed from time to time throughout the country on the basis of the average cost of production. The department would also buy foreign produce to the amount required by the nation at the market price, and would then distribute at first as far as possible through existing channels; these channels would be modified by degrees to meet changing and improving conditions, thus gradually eliminating unnecessary departments, compensating, of course, individuals displaced. Both home and foreign produce, when identical in quality, should be sold at the same fixed and just price having regard to the cost of English production, *and* the cost of distributing. The nation might

perhaps make a larger profit on foreign than home goods, but as our object is to increase home production, it would not be wise to, at once, reduce prices, for we might well use any profit for the education and training of our own cultivators, and increasing the productivity of our land.

How far the Government should take over the retail trade would be a matter for consideration. It is possible that experience would show that the wiser course would be to deal with the produce from producer (represented, perhaps, by the local land club) to consumer, and so prevent fraud and adulteration. This would, of course, involve taking over the business of bakers, butchers, etc. I see no inherent objection to this course, although I do not think it is absolutely essential to our scheme. As a result, every shopkeeper dealing in food would be a Government agent when dealing with Government food. Thus a general shop might have a special department for eggs, and the proprietor would be paid a salary and small commission under the same arrangements as apply to shops having a special department for Government stamps and other post office business.

It will perhaps make the position clearer if I illustrate this suggestion by taking the extremely simple case of eggs. Government might, for example, fix the buying price for best English fresh eggs in April at 9d. a dozen; and would buy daily all the home produce throughout the country at that price.

obtaining possibly three million eggs a day. It might require a further million foreign eggs of identical quality; it could perhaps buy these at 8d. a dozen. It would then fix the selling price of these eggs, at, say, 1s. a dozen, and the eggs would be sold throughout England at all the depots and shops recognised by the Government at this price. In every locality the eggs having been collected at a local depot, sufficient would be allocated to meet the local demand and the balance consigned to the central market at the nearest large town where eggs were required. The whole matter could be regulated very much as at present to meet supply and demand, only with more knowledge of both the supply and the demand; but economies in management could probably be very quickly effected, just as they are effected when any large number of businesses are amalgamated into one large trust; for example, all the various people and societies that collect country eggs from any particular parish would gradually be reduced, perhaps, to one, who would go his daily round, either as the representative of the local land club or for the Government, as does the postman; then all the shops in the towns for the sale of food would be gradually organised and simplified so as to meet best the local requirements. This kind of reorganisation may at any time be forcibly effected by big shops and trusts who would kill out the present small shopkeepers and small dealers in the villages. Great care in any *Government* scheme will be required to protect the

interests of all individuals engaged in such industries at present; the nation can never afford to put any one out of work, and, moreover, where the services of any individual cannot be utilised in any branches of the work, he must be compensated by a personal pension, or installed as a producer; it is important to act with scrupulous justice.

To deal with another general point. The principle of a just buying price and a just selling price is a sound one, and the fixing of the price by an intermediary, in this case the Government, is no new idea. The fixing of the price by a third party—an independent assessor—must have been the almost universal rule in the greater part of mediæval trade as regulated by the guild system.[1] It appears to have worked well, and greatly helped the productive power of the producer; where it is in practice in this country, as, for example, in the case of third-class railway tickets and the charge for carrying letters and the payment of cabmen, it saves much friction. Ruskin and other writers on economics who have dealt with this point seem to me quite conclusive. In practice there are certain very great advantages. It shows the producer exactly where he stands and allows him to concentrate his energy and develop his individuality in his productive work; the risks and struggles of his life are still with him, and rightly so, but he knows that so long as his produce is good his market is secure.

[1] See Kropotkin's "Mutual Aid" (Heinemann), and the authorities therein quoted.

It is this certainty of markets that has provided a great incentive to the Danish farmer. It does away with competing amongst producers, so that all would be free from the paralysing fear of competition, and would freely give and take advice from those very friends and neighbours on whom they now so often look with distrust. It would be to the clear advantage of all to obtain the largest possible crops from their land, and consequently every help given by Government or the village land club in agricultural education would be absorbed and acted upon, and would make partly to the producers' and partly to the national benefit. Those who are in intimate touch with the smaller cultivator will know how this will help him ; at present he is the victim of persistent anxiety ; whether or not the accident of market will destroy his year's labour, he never knows. The speculative unrest in which he lives has an evil effect on his mind. "He becomes prematurely worn out and old," are words reported by Mr. Rider Haggard.[1] The market and the dealer is his enemy ; under the new system both might be his friend.

To the consumer the advantage would be probably even greater. I see no reason to suppose that prices would be increased, economies in distribution might reduce them ; further than this, the Government mark would guarantee absolute freedom from adulteration : the present system of inspection might be enormously simplified and made effective, as

[1] "Rural England," vol. i., p. 159.

everything would pass through the Government market; corruption would be almost impossible, as the testing officials could hardly be in touch with the producers.

Freedom from adulteration could in effect be secured. Then, whether rich or poor, the consumer could buy any article of food in however small quantities at the nearest shop at a fixed price. The food budget might thus easily become a fairly fixed element in life. This freedom from adulteration and fixity of price would be of enormous advantage to our poorer people, who suffer to an inconceivable degree in these matters. Freedom from adulteration would also save the lives of many children, and greatly improve the national health; we should have again the best milk and thoroughly good bread. Whilst producer and consumer would both be benefited, we should also eliminate the element of corruption, arising in the main from competition, which is now so strong in the middleman's trade. Great advantage would also accrue to the middleman. His abilities would be employed in the best possible way: an organiser by temperament, he would find his full self-expression in organisation. He would be freed from the temptations and anxieties that now surround him; the small dealer, in particular, engaged in an uncertain struggle, often of an inexpressibly mean character, would become elevated into a Government official, with no interest to serve but that of producer and consumer. His impulse

would become a generous one. As a general result there should be a harmonising of interests between all parties and the nation. It even seems to me possible that we might harmonise the quarrel between free trader and protectionist. For whilst securing for our agriculturist the protection of a just price, and giving him the first claim on the home market, we do not raise prices to our consumers, nor do we interfere with the general trade of the country, though we might divert some of it from foreign to home markets, for our agriculturists would rapidly develop into better customers for home goods than they have been for many years.

There may be some critics who will consider that the whole scheme will break down when we come to produce more food than we consume; when that happy day arrives, and there is food for all and to spare, the Government of the day will have to consider whether they will develop an export trade, or deliberately discourage further production, utilising the surplus land for more gardens, parks, and playgrounds. But even before that time comes it may be occasionally necessary to discourage the production of some fruit, for example, for which the demand may be less than the supply, and to encourage the cultivation of some other fruit or vegetable. Such discouragement and encouragement is now constantly taking place in a haphazard way by the variation of markets. Regulation will, *under our new system*, be reduced to a science; this

can easily be done when all the material information as to supply and demand are in the hands of one department. It is hardly necessary to go into details, but it is clear that there is no inherent difficulty, and the matter will be dealt with easily when the difficulty arises. A surplus of food can never be a great evil for a nation.

I have submitted this suggestion for the regulation of markets as a complete scheme, so that it may be considered and criticised more easily: I do not, however, suppose for a moment that it could be brought into force in such a way. It is more in accordance with the genius of the English people to make careful and modest experiments. It is likely that we shall move slowly in this matter. The city Councils are seriously concerned over the evils of the milk supply, and certain towns have already taken this department over. Cardiff has, I am told, taken over her fish market, and greatly reduced prices of fish. Other experiments are being made, and will be made from time to time. Meanwhile the evils and the corruption of the present system will be brought home to the public, and especially to the class of small holders, who will now probably rapidly increase. Such evils will be largely reduced by the co-operative system: then later may come the failure of the co-operative systems to obtain a fair price for the producers. In due time maybe some Government will be bold enough to tackle the question of eggs or meat, and, one successful

experiment having been made, the rest will follow; the sooner regulation of markets comes in some form the better for agriculture and the country, for corruption and mismanagement are a dangerous disease, and spread only too rapidly through the community.

ADDENDUM.

I, perhaps, have not in this chapter dealt sufficiently with transit difficulties. It must be clear to most thinkers now that our railways and other means of transit must be made thoroughly efficient by organisation into one system, controlled and directed in the national interest.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAGES OF LABOUR

WE may give to the people their elementary rights, access to land and capital, and there will yet remain a section who will take advantage of neither. There will be for some years, and there may be for a century, a class of men who either from habit or temperament will continue to be agricultural labourers, pure and simple: men employed permanently on the land of others. For this class we have at the present time a special economic problem: for the wages of the labourer are uniformly low, and often miserably so.

The official figures published for 1902,[1] show that wages in rural England varied from 10s. a week, paid in a village in Oxfordshire, to somewhere about £1 a week. To this should be added further earnings in harvest wages and extras of about £10 a year. The average wage for all labourers throughout England, with all extras, is officially computed at 18s. 3d. a week; in purely agricultural districts in the south

[1] *See* "Earnings of Agricultural Labourers" (Board of Trade Reports, 1906, Cd. 2376). There has, I think, been little change in rates since that year, in 1903 and 1904 at any rate: the maximum is perhaps higher.

and east of England it cannot exceed 17s. 6d. a week. On the other hand, his house rent is probably between 1s. 6d. and 2s. 6d. a week. So that in purely agricultural districts in the south and east the labourer can perhaps count on 16s. a week to create a home, feed, clothe, and bring up a family, to deal with the contingencies of sickness and death, and make provision for his old age. This is how we pay the man who is at the back of our civilisation. Of course, he may supplement his income by the work of his wife, or children, by overtime and Sunday labour in his own garden or allotment, but this is not really material to the point: his life should not depend on these sources of income, and the man himself should be sufficiently paid. If we are to build up an intelligent class of skilled workmen, able to deal successfully with the problems of scientific agriculture, it is most desirable that the standard of living should be improved. This, of course, involves better cottages at higher rents, and many other expenses. For this wages must be raised. We are met with the farmer's reply—a perfectly sound one—that if rent and prices are to remain as they are, he cannot pay more; but the matter must not stop here, the farmer must not suffer, but yet the question must be dealt with in the national interest. Our politico-economic system must be made to harmonise with sound principle, and to secure that the first claim on the products of *the soil is* assured to the actual workers, that the

wages of the labourer and the wages of superintendence of the farmer come first, and no profit should go to the farmer or rent to the landlord until these claims are satisfied. I have already indicated the line that reform should take in the fixing of land values and adjustments of rents, and shown its relation to this question, but it may be long before this matter is finally adjusted. Meanwhile we must either deal directly with the labourer's wage, or face two serious contingencies, namely, the continued drifting of our country labouring populations to the towns and colonies, or a national strike. The latter is not impossible, for it is no secret that the people are quietly organising themselves in some parts of the country. But both of these contingencies are national evils, and must be avoided if possible.

In considering this question, it must be realised that it is not a country question, but a national one. The underpayment of certain classes of labour, and sweating of the very poor, is a national evil, and we cannot overlook the fact that many of those who have studied the matter most closely have formed the opinion that State intervention to fix a legal minimum wage throughout England is absolutely necessary. Indeed, State intervention in the interests of the sweated populations of the towns is very generally approved.

This State interference is no new proposal: in the past the State constantly intervened to reduce wages when the labourers were prosperous, and in modern

times, notwithstanding fierce opposition, the State successfully intervened in the interests of women and children employed in factories, on the ground that their health and happiness was a national asset, and they were unable to obtain it for themselves. There is an equally strong case for interference in the interest of all suffering from poverty. Poverty, of course, is no necessary evil for the individual, but for a man with wife and children it becomes a social evil, involving possibly moral and physical degeneration; from it arises great waste of life and energies and loss of capacities which, if developed in a freer atmosphere, would be invaluable to the individual and the State: such capacities are now being lost to our civilisation.

Further, the right of the worker to a fair wage is already so far admitted, that in practically all Government and municipal contracts such a wage is insisted on. Surely, if a fair wage is insisted on for the makers of the nation's uniforms, it is equally necessary for the producers of the nation's food.

The *primâ facie* case for State intervention is therefore fairly strong. The fixing of wages is, however, opposed on the ground that it is (1) destructive of the national character; (2) is outside the scope of legislation and is not practical; and (3) that it is economically unsound, insomuch as it may destroy the profits of production.

As regards the question of character, bargaining for wages is not in itself a particularly elevating act,

and I gather it is distasteful both to farmer and labourer; moreover, I see no reason to suppose that a labourer who works for wages fixed by a trades union or by Government contract, or by the fact that he is employed in Government works, is degrading his character. Neither do I imagine that the New Zealander, in which country there is a legal minimum wage, is a degraded person. On the whole, I consider that a man at present under-paid is more likely to be degraded by his poverty than by having his wages fixed for him at a reasonable rate.

To the suggestion that the matter is outside the scope of legislation, the reply is definite. There are practical difficulties, and the details require careful adjustment, but they have been successfully dealt with in New Zealand, and can be here. These and other points are more fully dealt with by Miss Clementina Black, in her book on "Sweated Industries and the Legal Minimum Wage," and other writers; it is sufficient here to point out that the wage should be fixed on a cash basis and allowances computed; it must, moreover, be universal throughout the country, and should be based on the amount necessary for the labourer to bring up a small family in a reasonably happy life. Moreover, women's and children's wages must be concurrently dealt with.

As regards the economic arguments. One can imagine that some industries are so weak, economically, that a legal minimum wage will kill them; if that be so, it is better that the industries should be

killed and the workers should come back to the land and be employed in producing the national food. This destruction cannot take place in the case of the land; this will always be with us, and its cultivation by persons who would otherwise be unemployed is a national asset even if theorists tell us that it "does not pay," for, after all, we have the food produced and otherwise only wasted labour. Of course, a legal minimum wage cannot really help the workers who are totally unfit for their work, the unemployable. These people are the product of a system of bad housing and feeding, bad education, and no training, in fact of the nineteenth century system of free competition, and the devil take the hindmost. Our economic system has created them, and the State has an unfortunate responsibility for their care; they must be trained to live as decent and happy lives as possible, and, it is hoped, made self-supporting. They could be perhaps employed and trained in forestry and in labour colonies.

Apart from these special cases, the legal minimum wage would, it appears to me, be a premium on efficiency. The farmer, finding that the worst men asked the same wages as the best, would make great efforts to obtain the best men and keep them in permanent employ.

The question of a legal minimum wage has now, it seems, passed into the sphere of practical politics, and for my part I am inclined to think that it would be sound policy for the State acting in the interest of

the nation to strengthen the financial position of our poorer classes by fixing a legal minimum man's wage at the rate of, say, 25s. a week: the financial position of the nation seems to justify it. This would admirably supplement the other reforms mentioned in this book. I assume that out of this wage the labourer could pay 5s. per week for his cottage and rood of land, a price at which it would just about pay a local authority to provide a cottage at the cost of £200. Whether the remaining £1 a week would be sufficient to create and keep together a permanent home life until his children had completed a thorough education remains to be seen; at least, this minimum would be a sound step in the right direction, and a safeguard against the degeneration of the race in town and country.

It may be said that the difficulties of the agricultural labourer will be solved by the extension of small holdings. A man cannot be the successful servant of the farmer and also a self-supporting cultivator on his own account; a labourer can only be a landholder on a very small scale indeed. If he gives his best work to the one, he neglects the other, or else he overworks his wife and children. It is eminently important to provide every labourer with a rood or so of land with his cottage, and also give him a definite chance of rising out of his class and becoming a small holder; but many men have not the temperament, and will remain labourers all their life. Indeed, it is probably necessary at present for

the proper cultivation of farms that they should do so. It therefore appears to me to be the interest of the farmers also, who wish to keep labourers on the land, that the State should fix a legal minimum wage rather than risk the possibilities of a national strike, or what is far more probable, a further reduction of the number of men employed as labourers on the land. In any case, wages will doubtless, sooner or later, go up until a skilled country labourer obtains the same rate of wages as a skilled workman in the town.

Part III

THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

CHAPTER V

THE CULTIVATION OF THE SOIL

WHILST to secure fixity of rent and tenure for the cultivator is a matter of legal adjustment, and to obtain for him access to capital, and a fair price for his produce, is a question of State organisation, effective cultivation of the land, and the production of the fruits of the earth, depend mainly on individual character. Here the individualistic impulse, as in all creative work, is at its best, in direct contrast to the middleman's business, where it is at its worst. Here we shall find the true dividing line between individual and social effort. Indeed, the more a man struggles to make his land productive and benefit himself, the more food is produced and the better for the nation as a whole, whilst the middleman's struggle for himself may be to the detriment of producer, consumer, and the nation.

All the State can do for the producer is to encourage him to produce, and the economic reforms that we have indicated all have that object. By giving him a right to land and capital at a reasonable fixed rent and rate of interest respectively, we secure that the benefit of his labour goes neither to the landlord

nor the money-lender; by giving him a definite market for his produce, you allow him to devote his energies to production and secure to him a reasonable certainty that he will benefit by high productivity, and that every scrap of work he does on the land will benefit himself and the nation; by eliminating the element of competition and introducing just prices and honest trading, you also make him free from the bonds of ordinary competition, so that he will gladly give and take advice from his friends and neighbours, and substitute for the competitive struggle a spirit of mutual aid and friendly competition in producing the finest crops. Moreover, by raising the wages and standard of life of the labourer, you will by degrees build up a more intelligent class of men suited for the needs of the more scientific farming now to be introduced. This and the solution of the housing question is the principal work that can be done by the State in economic reforms; for the rest we must rely on individual character, for the getting of the best out of the soil is a matter for the man. The State can give him a permanent economic position; the one other thing he requires is wider knowledge. And there is not the slightest doubt that our economic system being settled, and the position of the cultivator made secure, wider knowledge will result in a great increase of productivity of the soil. This may solve the financial side, at any rate, of our problem of the revival of country life. For what *a man of* ability can attain with the best practical

and scientific knowledge at his command is most remarkable.

EDUCATION

This brings us to the question of agricultural education. But let us admit, at once, that not every one can learn to farm; it requires a certain type of mind, and to be a successful, practical farmer you must be willing to watch your farm as a good cook watches her cooking, and tend your animals as a mother tends her child.

What, however, you can do, is to familiarise the farmer and his sons and daughters with the best methods, and see that they take advantage of the results of the latest experiments. This is what is so much needed if we are to have a great increase of small holders; it is here that our educational system is weakest. We have in our system of agricultural education provided founts of knowledge; we must now irrigate the minds of the people of every parish if we are to obtain great results.

To consider our present position. "Within the last twenty years there has been a great extension in the facilities for agricultural education in England and Wales, and at the present time the colleges, schools and courses of lectures which afford opportunities to the farming communities for obtaining scientific and technical instruction are numerous and well adapted to modern requirements,"[1] but

[1] "Journal of the Board of Agriculture," Feb., 1907, p. 641.

"certain counties still do little or nothing for rural education."[1]

A study of the details of the official reports shows that there are throughout the country about a dozen agricultural or horticultural colleges, supported partly by Government grant, giving a liberal education of a very efficient character, making and conducting analyses of seeds, etc., issuing elaborate reports full of invaluable experiments and advice on details, and arranging throughout the country a number of lectures. The work of these colleges is supplemented by the County Councils, who give training in manual processes, spread knowledge by means of lectures, by model dairies and other similar means, and also in a few cases carry on special schools.

The County Council School at Basing is organised on a basis perhaps most suited to a wider introduction throughout the country; I therefore give an account of its work. It follows somewhat the lines of the German winter schools, of which there are a large number in Germany—about 131 in Prussia alone. There is winter training for lads and young men, and a summer course for women and girls. In the winter course the lads and men have two hours a day for indoor work, and are given concurrently one month each of the following practical subjects: farm-work, dairying, poultry, and fruit and flower culture. The training is most practical and valuable.

[1] Annual Report issued by the Board of Agriculture on the *distribution of grants*, 1905-6. Cd. 3317.

The pupils are also encouraged to follow market proceedings generally, to attend the corn-market and to estimate weight and prices of cattle, a point the value of which will be appreciated by those who have studied the chapter on the markets. They are also taught to understand farm machinery, taking the machines to pieces and carrying out repairs; horse-shoeing, smith's work and rough carpentry are also taught, and manurial and feeding experiments made on the farm. In the summer dairying and butter-making are taught to the women and girls, and any lads who wish to join. County scholarships are given from the elementary schools to this school. The pupils, who total, for the year 1905-6, forty-five, are lodged at a farm-house. In connection with this school, lectures and instruction are given in various centres throughout the country in poultry-keeping, bee-keeping, and dairying; over 300 people seem to have attended these in the year 1905-6.

Many County Councils also make various experiments on the land of a valuable character, but the most interesting side of their work is the instruction now being given by fifteen County Councils in the manual processes of agriculture—ploughing, drilling, draining, thatching, hedging and ditching, hurdle making and sheep shearing, pruning and grafting. This training is of the best type of education, as eye, hand, and head work together; it is given to both labourers and young farmers, and will be invaluable to small holders. It certainly tends to strengthen in

the men interest in their work, and helps to raise the status of the labourer. The teaching is, as a rule, done in the open field, and prizes are given at the end of the course. In Dorset a system of training and examining shepherds with relation to the actual flocks in their charge has been adopted. This system has also to be extended widely.

Another most interesting part of agricultural education which should also be extended widely is the attaching of gardens to elementary schools. There seem to be about seven hundred such gardens now attached to elementary schools throughout England, and about one dozen in Wales. In Staffordshire this scheme, supervised by a county instructor, has been taken up with the greatest interest. The garden plot is treated as a whole, as, in fact, a model cottage garden. This system is most practical, and teaches the principles of common action and mutual aid. In other places the system of cutting up the gardens into plots to be worked by individual boys is pursued, and to this I attach less value. There are also a few gardens used for teaching in evening schools scattered about the country. It is to be hoped that the girls are included in this instruction.

I have now given a slight outline of the arrangements for agricultural education already prevailing in England. I have to reiterate in the words of the report already quoted, that "certain counties still *do little or nothing* for rural education"; and to

add that much more seems to be done in other countries.

It is clear that the weak point of our present system is that it is not sufficiently complete, it does not cover all the ground; and it does not bring the necessary information within easy reach of everyone. We shall doubtless proceed to perfect our system by increasing schools on the model of the Basing School, by more manual training, and more school gardens. Even then we shall leave large numbers of our agriculturists, small farmers, and holders of small plots untouched. We have here a large problem, for it is necessary to make information so easy of access that people of energy will be tempted back from town to country by the certainty that every possible advice and help will be available for them when they take up the land. For we must not forget in this connection that this revival of country life is a national and not merely a country question, and it is necessary to leave no stone unturned to tempt our people back to the land. So that you have to put your knowledge into the simplest and most practical form, and bring it home even to people who are not agriculturists by training; then, moreover, you have to see them apply it rightly to their own plots. To do this we must appeal, above all, through the eye. It is here that (1) an official district adviser on agriculture (I would rather say "encourager") with a model farm, and (2) the village land club, described later, should come in. We ought to establish in every district a model farm,

supervised by an agricultural adviser or specialist. Such a man (or woman) should be paid by the Government or County Council, and his farm should be run to pay. He would be the recognised channel of information from the Board of Agriculture and the County Council to the district. Thus he would have behind him a well-informed Government department and the result of all the latest experiments, and before him the people craving for the information, provided it were put into a simple form and adapted to local requirements.

Such advisers are no new ideas: they abound in other countries, and appear to be employed throughout Italy as a necessary part of their agricultural system. Such men would be invaluable in England, if of the right type. They should not be too professional, but practical farmers with the best training that the country could supply. They would be responsible for the agricultural education of their districts. It would naturally be the man's interest to keep himself and his district up to date in all matters relating to cultivation, for his personal reputation would depend on this success, and he would obtain thereby both reputation and promotion. He would doubtless find it most successful to spread information by word of mouth, and should be available to advise every one in the district on the adoption of improved methods, the employment of manures—a matter which is essentially local, varying *with the nature* of the soil and climate—and generally

how to make the best of the land and the markets. The farmers would visit his model farm and discuss his experiments, and he would visit their farms in return. He would thus be constantly engaged in studying the needs of the district, and should never miss an opportunity of suggesting an improvement, and, if need be, arranging with the agricultural loan society to finance it. In all this work our agricultural adviser should work in connection with the village land clubs, where such are formed. I have already mentioned the desirability of forming such clubs, and shall describe their function more fully in the final chapter of this book. Such a club ought to be organised in such a way as to include all the best characteristics of the similar societies in Europe, and of the farmers' institutes in America; it should be based on the desire to promote a communal spirit and the revival of country life, and ought to comprise all the cultivators, small holders, and small work-people of the parish, and as many people as are interested in the ruling idea. In addition to the social element, which is of the first importance, and the co-operative society and loan society already described, the club should undertake to put in force the various Acts of Parliament, and thus obtain land and homes for its members. Then in conjunction with the local adviser the club should undertake the education of its members by methods as free from formalities as possible. In every village there should be at least one model small holding

the holder of which in return for a small subsidy might be a recognised centre of information. Moreover, the Land Club should encourage its members to devote small parts of individual fields to experiments with manures and seeds. These experimental plots are very widely spread in other countries and would be most useful in ours, and could be carried on at very small expense. The Land Club might provide the seeds and manure on condition that the farmer provide the labour. Such model plots would be carried on with the aid of suggestions from the agricultural adviser. The model farm in the neighbourhood, and the model small holding and the experimental fields in the parish, would be an invaluable element for bringing before the eyes of the cultivators the result of modern scientific training. I suspect that the country people would stroll round on Sunday afternoons, and as part proprietors in the experiment look at the fields and discuss the results.

These appeals to the eye should be supplemented by winter village schools, and winter meetings might be arranged by the Land Club at which the local adviser or some specialist could come down and start discussions on such questions as seeds, diseases of plants, vegetable and fruit farming, dairying, poultry, or manures; all such discussions should have special reference to the local markets and climate, and the character and chemical composition of the land.

The general object should be by every possible

means to disseminate agricultural knowledge and develop local productivity and individual capacity.

Great care should be taken to bring into this movement the less capable of the cultivators, to whom every encouragement and help should be given, these being the people who need it most. All should become conversant with the local possibilities.

By these and similar methods, a local adviser co-operating with the Land Club might do wonders in improving his district; a friendly rivalry between districts would then arise, and make agricultural shows of great interest and value.

To theorise on the subject of cost of completing our scheme of education in England is a difficult thing; but I will hazard the suggestion that an expenditure of £500,000 per annum might put our system into order, and successful cultivation thus encouraged would pay the nation not only in the health and happiness of the people, but in saving of poor rates. We should also feel that we have done what we could by agricultural education to restore our national life to the more reasonable basis of country life.

PRODUCTIVITY

I have now shown how to give to our people the knowledge needed to use to best advantage land and capital. These obtained, we shall be on the highway which leads to the creation of a successful agricultural State. It will be interesting to consider the results

we may obtain as we traverse the road thus opening out before us.

The efficient cultivation of the land is a problem which resolves itself into the creation of a surface soil full of the elements of fertility.[1] Nature does this herself, ever working through a more perfect and logical process than man could devise. The animals which consume the vegetation fertilise the soil with their droppings, and aid the plants through the gases they breathe out. The worms, beetles and other animals act as natural scavengers for all these droppings and other decaying vegetable and animal matter, and aid its reconstruction into fertile soil. We have to study this natural process, and utilise it to best advantage. We can do so in confidence that Nature has provided for us the elements needed to cultivate our soil properly and produce food for the people; but we must avoid waste, for Nature does not deal in surpluses, and waste undoubtedly deprives some one of what they need. In Japan, where this seemed to me to be clearly understood, every scrap of fertilising matter, and all waste water from every house in town and country, was made to follow the course that Nature indicated; it all goes back to the land, where Nature takes it in charge. In England we have in far too many places made the mistake of wasting the priceless refuse of our houses by sewage

[1] I have re-written these paragraphs after reading Dr. Poore's illuminating work on "Rural Hygiene" (Longmans); to it I am much indebted: in particular I have followed his *description of the* work of Nature.

systems, polluting our rivers, and transferring products which are really invaluable to the land in a form which is valueless. We have ignored the teaching of Nature, and she has had her revenge in the want of fertility of the soil and the deterioration of our national health.[1] And in considering this subject, it is better to get a clear idea of what fertility means. People talk of the soil being worn out; you might as well suggest that Nature was worn out; the soil is well described by Dr. Poore as "The living Earth." For the fertile surface is, in fact, a seething mass of living matter, ever consuming the fertilising elements that are brought to it by Nature and man, and becoming more and more fertile in doing so; without air and water the process is stopped; so culture and rain are needed. But with these elements the fertility of the soil can be enormously increased, for it seems clear that the greater the vitality and fertility of the soil, the more fertilising matter can it utilise, reconstructing it into more soil, and thus making it invaluable in the production of vegetation and food.

When the points that I have put are clearly understood, and it is realised how entirely the condition of the land depends on the utilisation of every element of "waste" produce, as it is now so misleadingly called, it will also be realised that one

[1] "Wicked waste means woeful want" is worth, as a guide to life, more than the conclusions of innumerable conferences of sanitary engineers. *See* also Dr. Poore's book above referred to.

of the most valuable elements in the cultivation of the small plot of land is the sewage, decayed animal and vegetable matter, ashes and other output of the house. It will be seen that a cottage cannot be really healthy without land; and it will be realised that whilst politicians talk bravely about allotments and small holdings, the labourer has another reason for his insistent request for a home with land attached.

To pursue the point a little further: the increase of our country population with such animals as they will bring with them will increase the elements necessary for fertilising the hungry soil, but we must set our faces resolutely against sewage systems. And in relation to this point, it is well to contrast Mr. Rider Haggard's experience of the admirable results of using the "waste" product of Beccles, where they have no sewage system, with a remark once made by Mr. Clare Read, the eminent agricultural specialist, that sewage could only be considered a nuisance. It must not, too, be forgotten that sewage systems not only carry away the very elements we want, and tend to poison land and water, but give to the speculative builder further encouragement for crowding houses together. An interesting concrete example of the value of house sewage is given in Dr. Poore's book already referred to; he describes how having purchased twenty-two cottages in an insanitary state, he reformed their sanitation *by introducing* earth closets; he then employed

the product and all other waste elements of the houses on a piece of direlict garden a little more than an acre in extent; under his simple system there was absolute freedom from smell; moreover, he obtained in the first five years of his experiment produce averaging in round figures £30 a year; in the second five years £50 a year; in the third period of five years £78 a year. Divide the experiment up amongst the cottagers, give them ten rods each of land, let them have a little capital and knowledge, then even out of such a scrap of land each might be reasonably expected to obtain £5 worth of produce, and incidentally do without a sewage system and avoid all sewage troubles.

Space would not permit me to pursue the question of the fertilisation of the land to any extent, but a few points may be dealt with. What you grow on the land depends on what you put into it, but it is of course necessary to fertilise the land with such manures or fertilisers as are suited to the particular soil; the question is essentially local. There are, of course, large numbers of chemical fertilisers, and it may be noted that the results from their use is, generally speaking, less permanent than the result of manure, and the whole value of some dressings are lost in an unpropitious season: this would not be the case if farmyard manure had been used. The reports of the educational institutions that I have described are full of the results of interesting experiments of the exact values of manures and fertilisers

on particular soils. I will illustrate the matter by giving a few results taken at random from the mass of information at our disposal. And let me say that light railways or some other method of transport, possibly collecting motors, are wanted at least as much to bring manure direct from towns to the land as to take the produce back to the towns. Take, for example, an experiment on Burgoyne's farm, near Cambridge:[1] we find a mixture of farm-yard manure and fertilisers, successfully selected to suit the land at a cost of £5 3s. an acre, applied at the beginning of a four years' course produced the following results per acre. In the first year, 31 tons 13¾ cwt. of mangles, valued at £11 17s. In the second year, 70½ bushels of oats (and 1½ bushel of light grain) and 36½ cwt. of straw, valued at £11 6s. In the third year, 75¾ cwt. of hay, valued at £11 7s. In the fourth year, 37 bushels of wheat (and 3½ bushels of light grain) with 36½ cwt. of straw, at a value of £9 17s. The total value of the four years' crops was £44 7s. All this means perhaps nothing to many of my readers. I may, therefore, say that the crop of mangles was about 50 per cent. above average, the crop of oats 75 per cent., the hay, (probably clover hay) about 100 per cent., and the wheat crop about 10 per cent. The profit from the use of the manure is computed at £4 15s. per

[1] "Guide to Experiments of the Cambridge University *Department* of Agriculture, Burgoyne's Farm, 1907," p. 91. *Plot 3.*

acre. The increase of productivity is, of course, the important point, for it means more national wealth.

Turning to the question of grass land, the same report dealt with the question of the use of basic slag. A more interesting report on this point is that of Professor Gilchrist, of the Northumberland Agricultural Experiment Station, on the improvements effected by using various manures on poor pastures with their effect on the sheep feeding on the pastures.[1] The report recommends the treatment of boulder clay pasture with 10 cwt. per acre of basic slag for a start, followed by a retreatment every third year of 5 cwt. an acre. Figures published show that every shilling spent on basic slag earned a return in increased value of mutton of 9s. 6d. on one plot and 7s. 11d. on another.

Again, Mr. Rider Haggard tells of a small tenant of his, whose land is of no special quality, whose crops in 1901 were an acre of good roots, an acre of wheat yielding 76 bushels (more than double the average), an acre of oats yielding 64 bushels (about two-thirds above average), an acre of clover hay yielding about 3 tons an acre (about double the average crop). It is impossible to pursue this subject much further, the matter is too vast, but one might easily take up all branches of agriculture, fruit farming, gardening, stock breeding, etc., and show what results may be expected when the know-

[1] *See* "Journal of the Board of Agriculture," December, 1906.

ledge on these subjects is systematically popularised and used with judgment.

I will add, however, a few miscellaneous notes in general illustration of the subject before us. In some other countries the Government provides at very moderate prices the services of high-class stallions, bulls, rams, etc., to meet the requirements of each district. Good breeds cost no more to keep than bad ones, and the improved results from improved breeds are most remarkable. In Hungary the breed of horses has been thus greatly improved. In Denmark the increase in the amount of milk per cow has been the most remarkable result of careful breeding. It is most essential that we should improve the breed of all our animals.

To take another point, very interesting experiments have been made in crossing wheats and other corn and obtaining new plants. Judging from the results already obtained, we may shortly expect a new variety of wheat superior to any at present in cultivation.

In addition to manure and fertilisers in ordinary use, I find the refuse from wood-mills, from bacon factories, from carpet factories and leather works are all being utilised in various parts of the country for fertilising. This suggests to my mind that if small work-shops were placed in the country their waste products could be well utilised on adjoining land.

It has been pointed out that the introduction of *a system of drying* fruits and vegetables might save

us a large sum annually in reduced imports: the development of our fowl and egg business might similarly save us £10,000,000 a year: good strains of Leghorns and Wyandottes and other selected breeds, if introduced widely into the country, would soon double our egg supply. The judicious development of our apple trade might save us £1,000,000 a year: our importation of potatoes is nearly £1,500,000 a year; a great part of these we could doubtless grow ourselves. I continue to believe we might with advantage, with modern methods, grow far more corn with gain to the nation in increase of food produce, even if the cultivator did not make a profit. I have seen very remarkable results on a market garden, which I myself started by treating beans and peas by nitro culture—a system of inoculating the soil with bacteria. The system seems to be extremely inexpensive, and has not so far as I can learn been fully tried in England, but I am told that in some of the States of America packages of the preparation are distributed free. It is said to be equally efficacious on any leguminous crop, and on clover, hay, etc., and generally enriches the soil. A pamphlet on the subject has been issued from the office of the *Review of Reviews*. From America also comes the remarkable results produced by Mr. Burbank in evolving new forms of plant life which may lead to great developments.[1]

[1] Described in *The Century Magazine*, March, 1905.

There are still in England large spaces of land suited for growing pines and other trees. Forestry gives increased health, and more forests would improve our climate; it may not be profitable for the individual, for trees take long to grow, but it would be to the nation. We import an enormous amount of wood; the value in 1905 was over £23,000,000. Only a specialist can say what is the best method of developing this important industry, but it has been calculated by Professor Schlich, in his works on forestry (in which he gives reason to suppose that we have suitable land available), that to produce the timber we import would require six million acres of land.[2] If these six million acres were afforested in the next twenty years, he calculated that it would employ 15,000 labourers, and when the forests were created they would give steady employment to 100,000 labourers.

It is unnecessary to pursue the subject further, and it is useless to dogmatise as to what may happen; but it must be clear to all that if the economic difficulties were settled and education brought home to the tillers of the land, the produce of the soil could be enormously increased. Moreover—and this is perhaps of even greater importance—we could find employment on the land for far more of our people.

[2] Quoted in "Towards a Social Policy," Essay V. (The Speaker Publishing Company).

CHAPTER VI

THE CREATION OF A COMMUNITY

IT is no easy thing to touch the chords that stir the imagination of the people of the country. Nature is a hard taskmaster, and, as she wears away the lives of those that serve her, teaches strange lessons. Her inexplicable force and perpetual mystery, watched from the fields from sunrise to sunset, gives an intuitive understanding of things essential; and those who learn must become a people apart.

This aloofness has been intensified by the destruction of our village common life. For now, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a village is but a jumble of people, with few common interests or generous enthusiasms, and without any true social life. The old solidarity of interest has been waning away for over three hundred years;[1] its decay doubtless began in the sixteenth century, when our rulers, finding the peasants had by combination become strong and independent, passed acts to prevent their uniting into brotherhoods or guilds. This destroyed

[1] Those who are interested in this change of life should read a remarkable pamphlet, "The English Via Dolorosa," by Richard Heath, price 1s., obtainable from the author, Trevereux Hill, Limpsfield, Surrey.

co-operation and introduced competition as the basis of all business.[1] The puritan movement destroyed the corporate amusements. The Enclosure Acts did away with common farming and eliminated the small holder; the introduction of machinery destroyed co-operative work, substituting for the long rows of mowers working in harmony a solitary man driving a machine. Thus the common life passed away; finally, our country exodus has reduced our chances of reconstruction by taking the most intelligent young people away. Even sport, which half a century ago was a common interest, is no longer a bond of union; indeed, game preserving is a constant source of disagreement.

There remains much mutual aid and common work in sick and benefit clubs, in the chapels, in parish councils, in games and flower shows. Much simple help is assuredly given by the people to one another in times of sickness and misfortune; and kindly aid—tainted sometimes, I fear, with patronage—is given from the squire and through the church. But there is no such thing as a village community, bound together by ties of interest and brotherhood, such as existed in mediæval European towns and villages, up to quite recent times in Japan, and even now in Russia. Moreover, there is no leisure; this must be first obtained, and then communal life could

[1] This break-up of the Guild System seems to have destroyed the position of the village blacksmiths, carpenters, and other craftsmen, who were in mediæval times the leaders in all social life.

be built up and great developments would follow. For the social problem of our country life is the problem of combining and harmonising interests, and although I do not believe that history will repeat itself, it is well to hear anything history has to tell us. It will help us to realise what is possible and to understand how human nature is trained and influenced by its surroundings. From the organisation of the mediæval villages and cities there is something to learn; amongst them, when a true community was formed, internal competition was practically destroyed and people worked in the main for a fixed price; great progress then took place in every direction, showing that individual development was greatly aided by such corporate life. The guild or trade union conducted the buying and selling of all produce at definite prices. The producers devoted themselves to production and not to haggling. The result was most remarkable.[1] Where the system prevailed there is good reason to believe that the hours of labour were short, the position of the worker was dignified, his wages high, and his surplus wealth and leisure devoted to work for the common good and to delightful amusements. All this came through corporate effort organised in the interest of good production, and not of competition or capitalism, both of which were definitely discouraged.

Without idealising or thinking of reverting to the past, we, too, must eliminate the defects of competi-

[1] *See* Kropotkin's "Mutual Aid" (Heinemann).

tion and the acute struggle for existence; we shall attain finer results through other methods.

This elimination of evils is the first step. I have suggested in other chapters how competition in prices and the competitive spirit might be got rid of and poverty alleviated. We will now supplement what has already been said by further considering the housing of our people, the creation of the small holders, the position of the farmer, and the vitalising of country life with new interests and amusements. These elemental matters once dealt with, the way will be clear for the growth of communities based on the ideal of mutual help.

In considering these questions, I give prominence to the position of the ordinary agricultural labourer, the skilled workman who gives his whole time to the routine work of the farm and has little or no opportunity for his own work; but the general trend of these remarks applies with certain obvious exceptions to the more highly skilled men employed on the farm, to the small holders, to the village tradesmen, and to the small people generally.

My own impression is that the class of agricultural labourer—using the word in the sense I have explained above—will gradually disappear. Young men will work for employers, but as they grow up, marry, and have families, they will settle down in the cottages and land which it is becoming a recognised policy for the State to provide for those who desire to work on their own account. Their places on the farms will be

taken in turn by younger men. Some, of course, will not wish to take the responsibility of land of their own, and will remain as workmen all their lives. And highly skilled men will doubtless retain permanently, at high wages, the more responsible positions on the farms.

But whatever his future, the agricultural labourer, pure and simple, is still, and will be for long, a permanent feature of country life.

The most striking thing about the rising generation of the labouring class and other small people is their detachment from the land. This I take it to be due to five causes. (1) A spirit of disgust arising from the ill-treatment of their class in the past; (2) an unsatisfactory educational system; (3) poverty and want of proper houses with gardens, and want of prospects; (4) the lack of vital interests in country life; and (5) the long hours of labour and want of holidays. And to these causes should be added the positive attraction of the streets, and the amusements of town life, which seemed to hypnotise our country people when once they leave us.

These causes require some general explanation before we proceed to suggest where the remedies lie.

We will take them in order. (1) Notwithstanding the improved position of the labourer, there can be no doubt that an extreme prejudice has arisen owing to the treatment given to the working classes in the past. Many men remember how cruelly they and their fathers were treated at a time when the farmers

prospered; innumerable stories are rife of poverty and semi-starvation, of men begging for work at 1s. 6d. and even less a day: of men dismissed after harvest without a word, to face the winter as best they could. The remark of a labourer's wife, "I would rather my children died than went on the land!" is not uncharacteristic, and illustrates the strength of the feeling against employment on the land. It is noticeable that the prejudice is not so strong amongst small holders, who are more attached to the land, and is less emphatic against such farmers as are also landowners. Certainly the labourers distrust the gentleman cultivating his own land less than they do the farmer; probably he can afford to pay better wages; he is more considerate, and there are perhaps more perquisites and tips about; cottages on his land are probably better. Still, on the whole, the labourer is suspicious of all the classes above him; a lamentable state of things which can only pass away with time and improved treatment.

To take the next point, there can be no doubt whatever that the modern education is a townsman's education; it entirely unfits village children for work on the land.[1] It fits them better for anything else, for whilst they avoid the land, they do well on the railways, in the police, in collieries, in many town

[1] On this point, and on rural education generally, reference should be made to a valuable memorandum by T. S. Dymond, presented to the Durham County Council. (Bailes, Durham, 1907.)

employments. This is no doubt partly due to the class of teacher employed. For the teacher is often a townsman or woman, and has little real understanding of country life. In the old days a child had an education invaluable in many respects. He was on the land by the time he was ten—often before, and so learnt to love it. The little lad who in the evening rode a big cart horse down to the water, and then himself took it on to the stables, who was later in the cowhouse with his lantern watching his father milk the cows, learnt to understand animals. And young children who took their part in the glory of the harvest, and were with the plough before sunrise, learnt to love the land more than money. My own childhood taught me these things. Now there is nothing in education which holds the boys and girls to the land.

Want of prospects and fear of poverty combine to increase the dislike. Unless he has exceptional advantages, the labourer knows that, whatever his skill and knowledge, it is by no means certain that he will be able, when he wishes to marry, to obtain a comfortable cottage and large garden, and if he does obtain a home, it does not follow that his position will be permanent. At one time the landlord looked upon the providing of a cottage as part of his duty. Making perhaps good profits on the land, he did not expect to make any profit from his cottages. This is largely changed now; the fact that cottages do not pay is a serious thing for the landlord,

who, consequently, does not build, and spends as little as possible in repairs and improvements. Consequently large numbers of cottages in many parts of the country are unsanitary and overcrowded. Even if the labourer can get a decent cottage, he holds much too often at the will of the landlord represented by a bailiff or agent or the farmer who employs him. Cottages are frequently held subject to a week's notice, and if a man loses his work on the farm, he is at once ejected from his cottage. Home life is of the first importance, and the people should not be liable to be turned out in this manner. The miserable uncertainty in which many of the labourers live destroys the sense of independence. Further than this the man knows that he cannot expect, whilst he remains a labourer, to earn enough to keep his home together, much less bring up his children in happiness and to the best advantage of the State. The evidence on this point is overwhelming. It will be remembered that the official figures indicate that wages in England vary from 10s. to about £1 a week, and that in purely agricultural districts the total payment of a labourer, including all allowances, would be about 17s. 6d. a week. This poverty of a class is a national evil, and must be alleviated. It makes it impossible to keep the family together: it therefore scatters to the winds.

The dreariness and want of privacy in country life *have had a* most depressing effect. Since those old

country amusements, which belonged to a time of greater independence, died out, little has arisen to take their places, save certain artificial entertainments, such as penny readings and concerts, not really belonging to the life of the people. Moreover, there is far too great publicity in country life; every one knows every one else's business. It is bad enough for boys and girls to be crowded together in the smaller cottages; it must require special restraint to love your neighbour when he or she is almost on your doorstep; and to know that all your doings are echoed through the walls to neighbours on either side must be a constant source of irritation. The first thing the people in the country want on rising in life is and will be a detached house, a permanent home. Lastly, we must deal with the long hours, for there are few half-holidays in farm work, and there is, of course, much Sunday labour.

All these things combine to detach the labourer and to a less extent the other country people from the land; it is now easy to leave. Sixty years ago men had to walk to the town if they wanted work; it was a wild adventure, a plunge into an unknown land. Many adventured and succeeded. Now it is a different matter. Every employer of labour looks to the country for his best men. I have known of employers of labour canvassing country districts for lads and getting many; but often the lads go first to their friends and the girls go to service. The railways are at their doors. The demand for country

girls for service is apparently unlimited. The schoolmaster and the parson help, they are ready with references. It is all so easy now. The spirit of unrest is upon us.

How one looks at this matter depends entirely on what importance one attaches to the life of the people and to the necessity of building up a sturdy, healthy, happy population. Those who realise that the whole national vigour is bound up in this matter will also see that this side of our problem must be dealt with radically.

THE LINES OF RECONSTRUCTION

We have (1) to remove the prejudice, (2) reform the education, (3) solve the housing question, (4) give every man good wages, more leisure, and better prospects, and (5) remove the dreariness and increase the living interest of country life.

The problem is greatly complicated, as we have not good material to work on. We are trying to build without mortar. The active minds who have the power and energy to deal with a question of this sort leave the country in disgust. But a solution must be found, and it is now indicated. The one hope is with the young people.

As a first step, our schools must be imbued with a new impulse. To begin with the teachers. All rightly educated people love the country; our teachers should do more—they must understand it; and everything that is possible must be done in their

training to increase their interest and understanding of the land. They will then believe and so be able to teach with conviction that it is better to remain in the country than seek imaginary wealth in the towns. They will then be able to get into the heads of their pupils the philosophic truth that underlies the proverb "God made the country and man made the town"; that the cultivation of the land is the greatest and most inspiring occupation in life, for whilst it is not easy, but involves endless care, industry, persistency, and faith, it gives vigour, health, and happiness. That men and women who remain in the country and bring up children in healthy and happy surroundings are doing what is pleasing to God, and helping to build up the national greatness; whilst those who go to the towns grind down others of their class to conditions of poverty and are bringing a nation to decay.

To turn to the practical details. The little children should be expected to bring to school the leaves and flowers of various trees and plants, to grow seeds, and in other similar ways be led on by simple Nature study to increased interest in the country. As they grow older they should make collections of flowers, grasses, etc., and be in every way encouraged to study Nature, especially as shown in the actual cultivation of the soil in the parish. Their sums should deal with country matters, such as the measuring of fields and stacks, the number of hurdles required to surround a given space, the cost

and size of chicken runs, the expense of feeding a pig, the time it would take to plough a field; and this arithmetic might be illustrated in the school garden, or better still on the farms in the neighbourhood, so as to harmonise the work with the environment. Similarly history and geography should be taught in relation to the surrounding country with its fields, streams, roads, and soils. School gardens (a subject I have already dealt with) should be allotted to every school,[1] and where the teacher is not interested in these things, it is better that he should not teach, but that some one should be found in the village to undertake the actual garden work. Poultry keeping should also be carried on at the school, particularly for the training of the girls. Our general object must be to develop the powers of observing and understanding Nature in all its manifestations, and of this object we must never lose sight. The children should be made to see that every form of farming, fruit, and vegetable culture and gardening is full of detailed interest, and is worthy of the best minds and most skilled hands. To aid this, visits to the model district farm and local experimental fields should be arranged, and made as amusing and instructive as possible.

I have found very varied opinions as to the best way of arranging the school hours and age of leaving school when considered in reference to the important

[1] In some districts of Russia they have small model farms. Why should not we?

question of getting the children on to the land, if we are thus to interest them early in agriculture. It seems generally agreed that children must remain entirely at school until they are twelve years old, but it is suggested that if they stay longer away from the land they never get the intimate knowledge that is necessary for a farmer's life. It has been proposed (1) that children should leave school at that age, provided that they attend evening schools until they are fifteen; (2) that, after twelve, they should either work on the land in the summer, and at school in the winter, or should work on the land in the morning and at school in the afternoon. Both farmers and teachers want the children. A conference of farmers and teachers, presided over by an educational expert, might find a solution of this thorny problem. Meanwhile I will add a suggestion to the general discussion. General interest and knowledge of country matters might be fostered in the children up to twelve on the lines I have already indicated, work on the school garden being obligatory to all. After the age of twelve and until fifteen all boys who had any interest in agriculture might be given special holidays in hay time, harvest, and at any other time when there was special need of help on the land. Arrangements might also be made for their regular employment by small holders and farmers in the neighbourhood under some sort of apprenticeship system, whereby they secured a certain amount of definite training in return for their work; this training would be subject

to some slight regulation by the agricultural adviser of the district. The boy would continue to give two or perhaps three hours a day to school work until he was fifteen. Specially capable lads might receive special training on the model small holding, and then be transferred to the model district farm. Similar training could be given to girls in dairy and poultry keeping, and perhaps horticulture and other subjects. In addition to training our boys to be good farmers we should thus train our girls to be good farm wives. We want fewer kitchenmaids and more dairymaids.

I have assumed in submitting this suggestion that our agricultural labourers will in the future be sufficiently well paid to make it possible to live without the support of child labour; it is, I think, clear that this is necessary if we are to educate our children to be good cultivators and fitting citizens of the State. Special care must also be taken to give thorough country training to the children of those who will, it is hoped, with the revival of country life, return from the towns. There should also be taught at the schools, and to this I attach great importance, such country dances, songs, and games as are natural to country people, and likely to become permanent elements in the life of the boys and girls: this will enable them to take their part in the movement for making country life gayer and more attractive.

Such a course will replace the old custom—admirable in many ways—of training the children on the land, and will make them on the one hand devoted

to Mother Earth, and, on the other, able to grasp with ability the more scientific type of farming which we shall doubtless have now to undertake; further, they will be better able to take part in the social life that will, we hope, be built up.

Having educated your children and secured their interest in the land, it is necessary to secure good wages, permanent homes, more leisure, and better prospects.

The question of wages has been already dealt with in the chapter on the wages of labour; it may, of course, be solved by the organisation of a labourer's trade union, which, if successful, would result in the men in the country being paid at the same rate as skilled workers in the towns. Half-holidays will also have to be given. When better wages are secured, the solution of the housing question will become easy. The want of houses is a most serious evil, and it is fortunate that all who have studied the question are in agreement that private effort cannot solve this problem in such a way as to secure to a self-respecting peasantry decent detached houses with large gardens, clearly necessary for their real development. Recent legislation has recognised the duty of the State to house the people, and the matter is in the hands of the County and Parish Councils, and thus of the people themselves.

The Councils should, therefore, now proceed to build, and so by degrees solve the question. Difficulties will be lessened when complete access

to the land is attained, and the labourer can afford an economic rent. But even if he cannot the houses should be provided at the cost of the State; it will pay by the increase in the health and happiness of the people, by saving in the poor rate, and in the cost of asylums and hospitals.

The report of the Select Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes Acts Amendment Bill (11th December, 1906) emphasises the seriousness of the question thus: "The want of proper houses (both in town and country) is at the root of many of those deplorable evils, the repression of which has cost the public millions of money in the shape of workhouses, asylums, hospitals, infirmaries, sanatoria, reformatories, and prisons."

This building of houses must be accompanied by pressure on the landlords to put their cottages into a sanitary condition, and this should be coupled with an offer from the local authorities to purchase any property at a fair price. To help the solution of this question it is obvious that medical officers of health must be permanent officials, independent of local considerations: at present they too constantly evade their duties, largely out of consideration for the people themselves, who often can find no sanitary cottages, and might be turned out into the roads if the unsanitary ones were closed.

It is essential that every cottage should be provided with a suitable garden or attached small *holding. This* should be an important element in

every man's life. The allotment and small holding are of small value without the cottage.

But much more has to be done before the private interest of the owners of land completely gives way to the public interest of having the people housed and happy in the country. I attach great importance to the houses being placed in beautiful sites. The claim of the wealthy to capture the best positions in England and monopolise the beauties provided by Nature for us all, on the ground not of their necessities but of the power begotten of wealth, is no longer tenable; as has been shown, the holders of property are but trustees for humanity. And on behalf of humanity we must recognise that the best air and most inspiring sites should be the homes of those (whether rich or poor) who have the most need for fresh air and inspiration. This is an easy way of helping the imaginations of the people without tampering with their individuality, a method free also from the least suspicion of charity or patronage, for we are only giving to those who have need the advantages that Nature has provided for all. The woods and parks now retained by the rich can therefore no longer be looked on as their private preserves, and must be made free to the cultivators of the soil and our country populations; and the law of trespass must be modified and made to conform to the Swiss law, which allows all to wander freely, provided they do no damage: though certain enclosures might be reserved for wild birds and animals.

It will be argued by many sensitive people that even if the woods and parks are not to be reserved for the amusement and possible spiritual elevation of the few, they should not be disfigured by the introduction of small houses and busy people. This argument, I confess, carries some weight with me, for it is undoubtedly true that the decadence of architecture has been such that any new cottages are likely to disfigure the landscape. But this is not essential; there are a growing number of architects who grasp the real laws and ideals of building, and the ability of such men, acting with care and discretion, would make it possible to build groups of cottages and even small villages on the borders, and sometimes even in parks and woods, in such a way as to increase the beauty of their surroundings. Whilst remembering that happy children can hardly spoil their surroundings, the silence of large secluded spaces must not be interfered with.

One cannot help recognising that the less generous-minded owners will continue to raise objections. To me the question always presents itself as an issue between the misery of the slums and the beauty of the parks. I have tried both, and my view perhaps is warped by my experience. One can hope, at any rate, to make clear to landowners that in addition to a money compensation, their loss of the somewhat selfish pleasure of private ownership cannot fail to be compensated when they see and feel the happiness of a people.

If we are to attach the people to the land, no difficulties should be put in the way of providing beautiful and suitable sites for homes.

It is only desirable to add that the cottage, subject to the rent being paid, should be practically the property of the tenant. His home must not be liable to be broken up at the whim of anyone. No home life is possible without this permanency, and home life is of overwhelming importance. This certainly cannot be obtained by peasant proprietorship, which results, as a rule, in the land drifting back into the hands of large owners. It can only be obtained with certainty by the community purchasing the land from the present owners and letting it to tenants.

The question of housing will, it is hoped, be dealt with on these lines; it is also necessary that would-be cultivators should have, as already explained, complete access to land and loan capital to cultivate it, and advice as to the best means of cultivation. Then every one will have a definite prospect; he will be certain that he can obtain an allotment, a small holding, and even a larger holding if he has the capacity to deal with it. It is useless to dogmatise about the advantages of various sized holdings. The size of the holding suited to a man depends on the size of his family, the nature of the soil, the character of the markets, and the capital available, but above all on the man himself, his brains, his knowledge, and his devotion to his work. But the main point is that the cottage and land should go together. The

small holder will probably become the backbone of country life: from such of his children as do not follow their father's footsteps will be recruited the best of the labourers and artisans, and many of the daughters will go as servants for the wealthier people. The right of the people to small holdings is already recognised by statute;[1] it is desirable to extend these rights and foster the demand. Command of capital, easy access to knowledge, and regulation of markets, are the best way of doing this; for, as already explained, small holders are often paralysed through want of capital and knowledge, and through market difficulties. Thus by degrees many small farmers will obtain the permanent position of State or parish council tenants. It will doubtless follow that the others, seeing the advantage of this position, will wish to be similarly treated. A general demand for the taking over of the land by local authorities will thus grow on all sides; and in a generation the greater part of the land may pass into the hands of local authorities. This is practical land nationalisation. But in many cases, doubtless, farmers and small holders would remain in their present positions as tenants of a private owner. But where it is the tenant's wish it is only fair to him that he should be freed from this precarious position, and have his freehold taken over by the parish or the State, and thus obtain a permanent position on the soil. This is a point of great importance to many holders of small plots and

[1] *Small* Holdings and Allotments Act, 1907.

allotments, whose rents are often exorbitant and tenure uncertain. But many farmers would not wish this; such people are in effect choosing to stand by the old system; they are well within their right in doing so, and it is certainly not unnatural for the older men to prefer to continue in methods to which they are accustomed. But rents having, in those cases where revision was asked for, once been refixed, these farmers would be unlikely to expect any further adjustments of their economic position, and indeed would not be entitled to it. The remedy of any one with a grievance would be to have his freehold taken over, and to become a tenant of the State or parish with all the concurrent advantages.

The two systems might for a generation run side by side. A somewhat similar position arose in many Russian parishes in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A legal division of the commune or parish having taken place amongst the peasants, many who had what may be called the social temperament combined their plots and farmed co-operatively; others, however, retained their individual positions. As a general rule, I believe, the improved position of the joint owners so influenced the others that the whole parish became a common farm, but at the present time in many places the two different systems still run side by side. Similarly for many years in England the parish will probably be divided, part owned by the State, or parish, and farmed by tenants, who will be in a position of great security, and part

owned by private individuals, who will farm or let to tenants, who will be often specially bound to their landlords by tradition or personal affection for the system or an individual. This will be a phase. But as a permanent arrangement, I attach great importance to houses and land being provided through the State or by local authorities rather than by individual landowners. It gives the people fixity in their homes and confidence in the power of the State, and of its will to help the people. Further, I think that whatever the course taken, the ultimate object should be to vest all the land in the parish as represented by its council. As an arrangement, it is easy to be understood by the people, and it gives scope to the best villagers to divert their love of self-expression from self-interest to public interest. It helps to create a really vital public life. It makes public action simpler; for example, it makes it easy to carry on farms belonging to the villages as experimental farming centres, in the general interest, and makes it possible to provide land for co-operative farms, common grazing, and other public purposes.

It gives every village the chance of fulfilling its destiny, freeing it from the bonds of officialdom or social tradition; a free village promotes individuality, strikes the popular imagination, helps the people to recognise the value of corporate action, is an element in the construction of the new community.

THE HEART OF THE PEOPLE

We now come to perhaps the most important point in the creation of a community, the filling of the minds of the people with larger issues and more generous thoughts. Without new ideals we can have no new life; we want a new spirit, and with it a freer and wider social life. We want to cut out the lower and introduce the higher motives. We have not only to reform our material condition and to overcome the tendency of a purely agricultural population to sink into lethargy of mind and to remain apart; but if we are to bring our people out of the towns we have to make country life in every way more vigorous and attractive than town life. We have to change the centre of national interest from town to country. In earlier days a great deal of this work of change of thought would devolve on the Church; but in these days the Church seems in most places to have lost touch with the people as a whole, and there seems more inspiration outside the Church than within it. This I say with great regret, for it is inspiration we want, and the churches should provide it; will they do so? Whether they do so or not, there is a small class of people who are singularly suited to this work, and whose help is urgently needed for this purpose. There has during the last quarter of a century arisen in England a certain number of cultivated craftsmen and women, they

are hand-workers, principally workers in various metals, jewellers, wood-workers, bookbinders or printers, weavers or workers in stone or plaster. Some have workshops employing a few highly skilled men or women; others work alone; others drift into trade workshops or work for trade firms and have all their imagination and individuality driven out of them; some become teachers in schools, others designers. All these people would live much better out of the towns, and would do their best work in country workshops. A good many are already established there; it is most desirable in the interests both of the country people and of themselves that more should go. For with their artists' sympathies and imaginations, qualified and socialised by daily contact with the problems of life and labour in their workshops, they would introduce knowledge, poetry, and imaginative force, and thus supply to the country the very element that is wanted. They also are a people apart; but their essential spirit is the same as the spirit of the country people.

For such artist-craftsmen as are anxious—as most of them are—to take a more definite position in our national life, I suggest that their proper function is to go into the villages and small towns, to identify themselves with the movement for the restoration of country life. But whatever the sympathies of the craftsmen, it is little likely that any such general movement will take place without the assured support of at least a section of the public. As a rule the

craftsmen's workshops can be carried on as well, and indeed better, in the country than the town; but the craftsman of ability is generally a poor man who lives from hand to mouth, and his market is in the cities. The movement would want the support of a strong central organisation which would help individual craftsmen and women as they emerge from their training to start in suitable country places, providing, where necessary, a little capital for plant and tools. The central committee of the league of country people hereafter suggested must undertake this work, and the local members might interest the localities through the press and otherwise in the work, obtain the support of the churches, and impress the value of employing the craftsmen as teachers for evening classes on the County Councils and other local authorities, for which purposes these authorities have available funds. In dealing with this matter we must definitely encourage the craftsmen even if it involves personal and national sacrifice, for he is one of the sources from which a new spirit will come for the rebuilding of our national character. From the persistent re-introduction of the craftsman into the country there would come a different feeling, a re-inspiration of all kinds of labour, for the enthusiasm and knowledge of the artist-craftsman would tend to revive in the village blacksmith, carpenter, wheelwright, and shoemaker the old ideals of their trade. Concurrently with the return of the craftsmen would, I hope, come more artists, painters, singers, and

musicians. Large numbers of these are being trained, far more than the towns can employ, and they might well use their genius in the reconstruction of the village life. There would also come back to the villages architects of the more imaginative and less pretentious type who might well be engaged on building new cottages and public buildings.

Many of these new people are already in the country and at work on this cause: free as they are from the social paralysis arising from the remnants of the old semi-feudal systems, and untainted by the disease of commercialism, they bring a new imaginative life; more will come, but whatever happens, we must avoid anything which does not grow naturally; still we may hope that all those old simple pageants, plays and dances that have vanished into unnatural night would see once more the light of day. To country people these things are natural; they are in the blood, and it only wants the directing energy of a few artists and craftsmen to revive them.

It is necessary that we should appeal to the eye and imagination of the people by providing a definite centre for this new life. Every parish should have its village hall; and it must be a really imaginative building designed by an understanding architect. It should be built by village labour only, and be the pride of the village. It would contain all public institutions: the post office, the office of the parish council, the co-operative or other market room, and also be the centre of the village land club with all its

branches, and of the political life and other local activities. There should be a public room, free to every one, without question, for meetings, for debates, for reading and for social life; it should have a library and a stage, and be specially suited for music. This grouping would strike the popular imagination.

From this centre could be arranged the social life of the neighbourhood. The capacity for dramatic and musical entertainment and dancing amongst the country people is undoubted; all it requires is direction by our artists and others of imaginative ability. The choral societies, and musical and other entertainments, already existing on a somewhat artificial basis of patronage, could be reorganised by the villagers themselves; with our artists' help they could be greatly improved in quality and become far more of the life of the people. All the outdoor games, including golf, tennis, and croquet, might also be popularised. The abolition of the law of trespass would make it impossible for the wealthier people to monopolise commons and uncultivated spaces for their private use as golf clubs, and such grounds could be made free to all. Such monopolies lead to strange results. To see little village lads taken from school or decent work to carry round the golf course the clubs of strong men is a curious sight; and to watch the wealthy people playing croquet and tennis whilst the village children play in the streets at the risk of their lives from passing motors is a depressing spectacle. To give to all the right to the amuse-

ments now monopolised by a class would be a great help to our civilisation, and prevent much jealousy and ill-feeling: those of the richer people who desired to help in this movement would doubtless open their gardens to all.

There is no doubt that in addition to the craftsmen and artists who are already leaving the towns, other men and women of simple tastes and imaginative capacity will return to the country, if free access to land and capital and markets were assured, and would with gaiety help in this work. Members of the clerk class would, it is hoped, also return to the country; some earning perhaps a precarious living on the land, others taking part in the administrative work that the reconstruction of life and markets might involve. Lastly, it is hoped that small workshops will be reconstructed in the country. Many people think that the towns are full of large factories. There are undoubtedly many large factories, but almost all work of personal interest is done in the innumerable small workshops. Many of these small workshops would do better in the country than the towns, and the artisans would help the life: our loan societies might use their funds to bring such people to the country. Another advantage arising from this step has already been indicated. It would make it possible for such of the youth of the country as were not attached to the land to remain in the country as artisans; thus the homes and continuity of life would be retained. On the other hand, so long as large factories are

managed on the present competitive lines, it is hoped they will be kept out of the country: for they bring with them a mechanical and wearisome life.

It is unjust to leave to the towns our responsibilities for the submerged tenth: these people also must be dragged out to the country and laboriously trained to return to better paths of life. General Booth, in his labour colonies, has shown a way; and many could perhaps be employed in afforestation. Thus in due time we might double and treble our country population, and do what is of all things most important, relieve the pressure in the towns. Let us remember that no one can live healthily where plants do not grow freely and naturally, and until we have brought out half the people from the crowded districts of the towns, we have done but little.

It is hoped that the landlords and farmers, parsons and ministers, will take their part in the reconstruction of country life. The squires are often as detached from the people as the West End is from the East End of London, but this difference will gradually wear itself away. On the farmers life has weighed with extreme and unjust pressure for a quarter of a century. We hope that this pressure may be removed and life become freer. But it is scarcely probable that initiative in any reconstruction will come largely from either of these classes, who are much bound up in the social traditions that have too long strangled

our country life. But as the influence of these traditions die there will be a new growth, and a way will show itself for the community which cannot fail to spring from the spirit of this new century.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAND CLUB AND LEAGUE OF COUNTRY PEOPLE

WE have finally to deal with the form which this new community should take. I have here a definite and final proposal to make.

I have already referred to the value of local associations which I have called Land Clubs. The idea is not a new one. Many country associations, farmers' clubs, and institutes founded on a communal spirit, and animated by a determination to revive country life, and to infuse into it new meaning, have been recently formed. They are to be found not only in our own islands, but throughout Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, Canada, and other countries. Similar associations were strong in Europe up to the middle of the sixteenth century, and were gradually broken up under the pressure of a ruling class hostile to the spirit of independence then arising amongst the common people. I propose to give neither a historical summary nor an exhaustive investigation into present organisations, but to suggest a form of association which I believe will be suited to the genius of the nation, will give hope to

the people, and will deal effectively with some of the more pressing problems of English life. Many working people have aided me in its preparation. Nevertheless I suggest no features that have not been tried elsewhere, but have combined the characteristics of many organisations.

In every district, and probably every parish, it is desirable that there should be formed a club or society of those people who are interested in the reconstruction of country life on a democratic basis. It must be animated by the spirit of comradeship, and must substitute the principle of mutual aid for the practice of self-interest.

Its practical work will be the revival of country life.

Its first duty will be to enroll as members, labourers, small holders, village workmen, and such others of all classes as are in sympathy with this movement. Next, having appointed a committee, it would be well to divide the work into branches; and it should be carefully made clear that whilst all will be asked to work for the common good, there can be no coercing of minorities to do work which is uncongenial to them.

The first step for such a Land Club will be to consider the needs of its members in regard to land. This being done, the club would put into force the new land law that came into operation on the 1st *January, 1908,* and obtain for the people such land *and buildings* as they require. Here at once arises

the question of the right to the land, the claim to which would be enforced by the Land Club.

Concurrently the question of the housing of the people would have to be considered, the present laws put into force, and better ones demanded. This right to a permanent home must be made the basis of our civilisation.

Then will arise the consideration of the position of those who require a little capital to start their work as cultivators. A loan society must be formed, as a branch of the club, on the lines already described, to provide individuals with a little money to help them in starting, thus illustrating the right of access to capital. It is obvious that the poorer a man is the more he will stand in need of such a loan, and the more help he will require in starting. As the club will be based on the principle of mutual aid, its first duty will be to help those who have the greatest need. The Land Club might also start a savings' bank, which would be instrumental in finding money for the purposes of the loan society, and where this was not possible arrangements should be made for raising money elsewhere.

The question of land and capital being thus dealt with we must consider the next requirement. The people must have training and advice by word of mouth as to how to farm their land to best advantage. This is access to knowledge. I have already indicated how this can best be arranged. The model fields and plots of the village can be

managed through the local clubs on the land of its members. And if the help of the government be not given for this purpose, groups of land clubs might even appoint an agricultural adviser and manage a model farm. Such a group would keep at their farm stud animals of the breeds most suitable for the improvement of local stock.

Then comes the question of manures, seeds, stock, fruit trees, etc. A Land Club, with the assistance of its adviser, would confer with all its members, and buy for them at wholesale prices the best and most suitable of everything that was needed for the land, and, where financial help was required for the purpose of the purchase, would provide it through the loan society on the lines already described.

The purchasing of a common stock of tools and machinery could then be considered, and, wherever possible, arranged to suit the requirements of the members. Joint insurance of stock, etc., would also be arranged.

Next comes the question of markets. The Land Club would have a department for collecting the surplus produce of its members. Such produce would, whilst our present system of markets prevails, be distributed in the first instance to satisfy local demands, and the balance consigned to the best market and sold under the best available conditions. The amalgamated clubs could, perhaps, organise their own markets, and with the knowledge thus

in their hands advise their members as to what was best to grow.

Doubtless in many places these land clubs would take much more active measures in relation to the acquisition and cultivation of the land. It could, for example, and this would be the most complete plan, form as a branch of the club a small registered Co-operative Society which would take the land itself and divide it up amongst its members. Such a society would also transact the co-operative business in all its departments except the Loan Society, and in some cases provide cottages and farm buildings. In other places, dairies for all might be started, and butter made. Mills for grinding corn, bacon factories, jam factories, etc., could be organised.

This might, perhaps, be the limit of its work in relation to agriculture, and it will be clearly seen that without a system of land valuation, such as I have outlined, a great deal of the value of this work would unjustly pass to the landlords, and on the other hand, if the markets were unregulated, would be unfairly lost in the competition of markets. These two forms of injustice would be so clearly seen that it may be expected that prevention would quickly follow. It would be seen to be essential that the freehold of the land should be owned by the community, and the markets organised to prevent unregulated competition and secure a fair price.

Another branch of the work might well be to

encourage the return to the country of the artisans, craftsmen, and others who are now forced to live in the towns, and whose help in the revival of country life is so sorely needed. They would undoubtedly help to enliven the village, and would incidentally aid cultivation by providing a local market.

The Land Club could take over in part the management of the village hall, and make it the centre of the various educational activities already described, and help to arrange the social life of the neighbourhood. Of the dramatic and musical possibilities we have already spoken: but we want much more communal gaiety and amusement, particularly in relation to the land—in the honour of mother earth. May-day and harvest festivals have almost sunk into oblivion, and have lost their meaning. Both could be revived, in a different way, perhaps, and if much more mutual help were given in the harvest field by all classes, the harvest festival would mean much more to all of us.

In Russia the people work together with gaiety in the harvest fields, singing in the rhythm of the scythes: harvest is thus a real festival. In Switzerland, in a similar spirit, the village youths make an annual expedition to the communal forests and collect wood for all. We must not despise any suggestions for reviving our social life, for in due time, as the pressure of life is lessened and the gaiety of the people grows, we shall want many simple amusements. I have often thought of flower festivals

in this country on the lines of those which I have found in the East. The flowers in this country are quite as beautiful as those in Japan, and parties amongst the apple trees in spring would be just as suitable and delightful as the festival of the cherry blossom, which is so great a feature of Japanese life. The beauty of autumn trees in England suggests a festival of the falling leaf to be held in the woods: the branches brought back could be arranged in the village hall, and prizes given for arrangements. Even a village black-berrying party might be made a festival, and a profitable one, too, for we import enormous quantities of blackberries from abroad, and all that were not required by the people could be sold for the benefit of the Club. Free access to woods and fields would greatly help this side of life. In all these plans all classes could meet with pleasure.

For the poor of their members the Land Club would soon learn to take responsibility. We know well the degradation of modern charity, which is constantly a curse to those who give and those who take. We can only with decency and delicacy help those who are really our friends. Moreover, members who realise the condition of the people in the slums of our great cities might show their true comradeship by helping to bring a few of this class out to the country, and trying to make their lives happier. The problem of the submerged tenth can best be solved by dealing thus with individual cases.

Another use of the Land Club would be to create a healthy public opinion: this, on the one hand, would secure the election of proper people on the parish and other local councils, and, on the other, prevent many of the arbitrary acts of oppression that disgrace our village life.

Finally, it is perhaps wise to emphasise the fact that without a new spirit little is possible. So our club must take a generous view of life and must be definitely free from that spirit of commercialism which tainted many of the best movements of the last century. It must be in touch with the churches and chapels, but should not exclude those who, whilst out of sympathy with modern forms of religion, find their inspiration in art or Nature, or in the work of service for others. Such freedom of thought combined with solidarity of action was the ideal of the Christian Church at its best, and has characterised many friendly societies even up to present times.

The value of such a club, even with a few members, is great. It gives hope to the people. But we must not limit our ambitions, and the aim must be to form village land clubs throughout the country and combine into county and national organisations. Since the preparation of the first edition of this work Land Clubs have been formed in Kent and Surrey, and they have federated into a Land Club Union. A league of country people might well be formed to combine with the Land Clubs. By this means we might also solve another problem propounded in the

first chapter. By the formation of an organised party understanding our country questions we should create a voice for country people, and give to the tillers of the soil their share in political power, now too much controlled by the rich and the work people of towns, and so put the State on a broader basis. Thus, by due combination of forces, we should bring back her children to Mother Earth and effect a spiritual and material revolution.

THE END

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